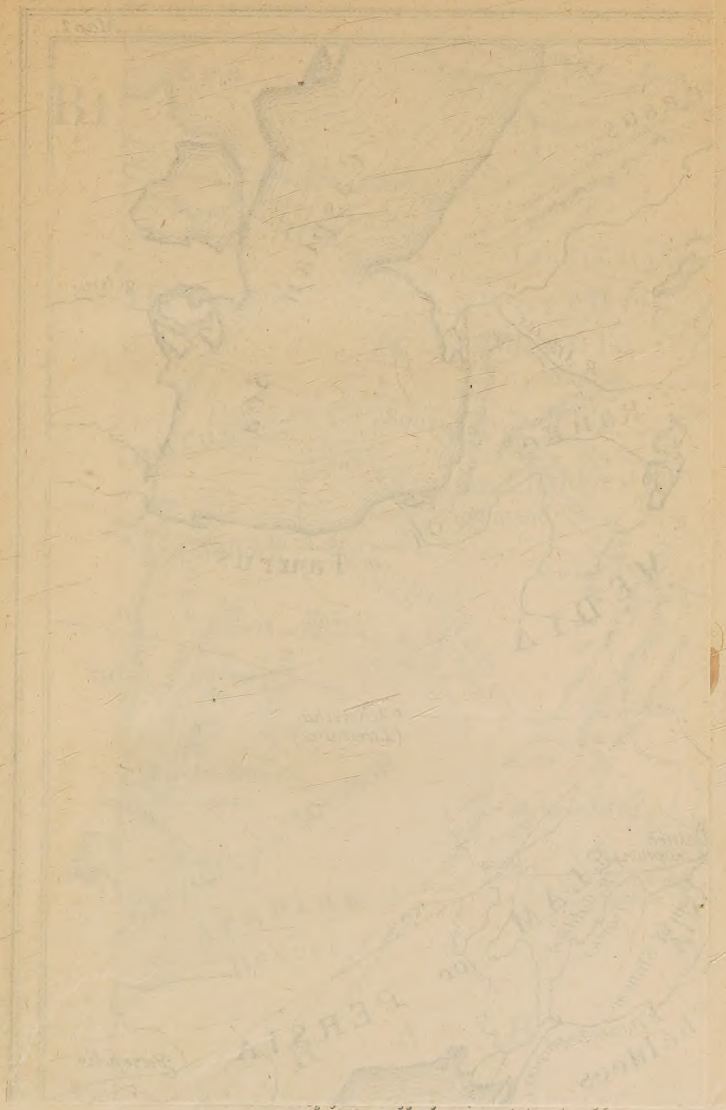

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THE

BIBLE FOR LEARNERS.

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VOL. I.

INTRODUCTION; THE GENERATIONS BEFORE MOSES; FROM MOSES TO DAVID.

PREPARED BY DR. H. OORT.

MEADVILLE

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

In preparing the first volume of the "Bible for Young People" for the English reader, it has been my wish never to pass from the functions of the Translator to those of the Editor. In other words, I have endeavored faithfully to give the meaning of the original, without in any case modifying it to suit my own taste or opinions, or thinking it necessary to signify my dissent where I cannot personally adopt its conclusions.

On the other hand, in a few passages where the original contains allusions and explanations the point of which depends entirely upon their being addressed to Dutchmen, it has been necessary either to omit a few words altogether, or to substitute the best English equivalents that could be found. In the same way, where the readings or translations adopted by the authors simply differ from those of the Dutch "States' Translation," no notice has been taken of the fact; but when, in the better-known portions of the Bible, they differ in important points from those of our so-called "Authorized Version" (executed by the command of James I., and completed in 1611), a note has frequently been added to call attention to the fact.

The proofs of this translation have always been submitted to the examination of Dr. Oort, and he has thus had the opportunity of assuring himself and the public of its faithfulness, at least in all essential points, and at the same time of introducing a considerable number of modifications of more

or less importance, suggested by his own continued studies, or by works of other scholars which have appeared since the original publication of this volume.

I have also to express my obligations to Mr. W. Blake Odgers, of the Middle Temple, who has looked through all the proofs, and, while by no means responsible for any blemishes of style yet remaining in this translation, has done much to reduce their number.

I must also offer my warmest thanks to the friends whose liberality has enabled me to publish this volume.

It only remains to give the reader some indication of the share which each of the three scholars, whose names appear on the title-page, has had in the execution of the work. Dr. Oort is responsible for the portion which deals with the Old Testament; but his work has always been submitted, before publication, to the careful examination of Dr. Hooykaas and Dr. Kuenen. By this means the chance of any inaccuracies finding their way into the book has been made as small as possible, and at the same time the author has secured the advantage of suggestions from two independent sources.

In the same way, Dr. Hooykaas, who has undertaken the New Testament, has throughout enjoyed the assistance and advice of Dr. Oort and Dr. Kuenen.

P. H. W.

A WORD OF PREFACE.

Dear Reader,

Be good enough not to skip this *Word of Preface*, for we have one or two things to tell you which it is absolutely necessary for you to know, if you are really to understand what follows; things, too, which may serve to show you the quickest way into the heart of our book.

We are ready to take a long walk with you; and if we did not think ourselves pretty well acquainted with the district through which our path will run, we should not venture to offer ourselves as guides. But our studies, our social calling, and our personal inclination have led us through the country so often that we know where to look for all the lovely little spots, all the magnificent views, all the wonderful panoramas, which it will be our delight to point out to you. And if there are places with which we are not very familiar — the way is so long and we have so many little excursions to make to the right or left — if there are places, then, to which some one else perhaps might be a better guide, we trust that we shall always keep in the right direction at least. Be this as it may, we venture to promise our companions that they will not regret having accompanied us.

You may see from the title-page of our book that the country through which our walk will lead us is the Bible.

Of course you have already gained some knowledge of this book. And yet, properly speaking, it is not *a* book at all, but two collections joined together. The first of these collections, which includes thirty-nine books according to the usual reckoning, is the Sacred Book of the Jews; while this same collection, together with the second, which embraces twenty-seven writings, makes up the Sacred Book of the Christians.

Several of the most important religions have a Sacred Book of this sort. Thus, the Koran is the Sacred Book of the Mohammedan, the Zend-Avesta of the Persian, the Veda

of the Brahmin, the Kings of the Chinese religion. Of course we Christians attach most importance to the Bible; and, indeed, every impartial judge must allow that no other Sacred Book can bear comparison with it, or approaches it in beauty, truth, and value. It does not lie in our way, however, to make any such comparisons; but we hope that what we have to say will convince you that we may safely call our Bible a mine of gold, and that some parts of it are of priceless worth. So we will not speak in praise of it just now, as it will be better for you to end, than for us to begin, by doing so.

Just one remark, however, on the character of the Bible.

From various points of view it deserves to be highly prized. It is of inestimable value, for instance, for our knowledge of antiquity, since it contains almost our only authorities for the history of Israel and the origin of Christianity. Some parts of it, too, have seldom been equalled as works of art, and may therefore serve to ennoble our taste and elevate our sense of beauty. But, above all, the Bible is the book of religion.

Observe, we do not say — the book of *our* religion, but of *religion*. Not that we would treat the other Sacred Books as of no value. Far from it. Hindoos and Persians, Egyptians and Greeks, have thought of God and the invisible as earnestly as the Israelites; and what the men of greatest piety and genius among these peoples have believed, what the founders of religion or the philosophers among them have declared, so far as it has been preserved to us in writing, not only in their sacred books but elsewhere too, furnishes no small amount that might safely be placed by the side of many portions of the Old Testament at least. Nor can we assert that every part of the Bible gives us a pure reflection of God's being and God's will. Time after time we shall be compelled to allow that the writers of the books of the Bible were men — constantly going astray, as such, in their search for the way to God. But we call the Bible the book of religion because the place of honor in the religious life of mankind and of each man in particular belongs to the person of Jesus, and because it is upon Jesus that the whole Bible turns. In this lies the value not only of the New Testament, a great part of which refers to him directly, but of the Old Testament as well. It is true that many of the Israelite writings are important even in themselves, for they give us a glance into the spiritual life of the nations of antiquity, into their social, political, moral and religious condition; but yet the Old

Testament would lose very much of its charm, and the whole course of the Israelite religion would have much less interest for us, had not Jesus been a child of Israel, and were not Christianity in so many respects connected with the religion of this race.

We hope that we shall never lose sight of the fact that the Bible is the book of religion while we are speaking of its stories, and that so we may gradually find a direct or indirect answer to the questions, "Who and what is God for us?" and "What are we to do and what to leave undone?" for it is our heartfelt desire and the highest object of our efforts, to quicken the conscience of our readers, and to make their religious feelings deeper and purer. Nor do we leave this object out of view in contributing to their knowledge, more especially of the history of the Israelite and the Christian religion, for we believe that this history clears our insight into the ways of God with man, and gives us the key to many perplexing facts in the region of religion.

In thus looking at the Bible from a distinctly religious point of view, we are in perfect harmony with its writers; even with such of them as adopt the narrative style, and will therefore engage the greatest share of our attention. For when the books of the Old Testament were set aside and preserved as a Sacred Book by the Jews, and those of the New Testament were added to them by the Christians, it was with no idea of drawing knowledge of nature or history from them, but because they recognized them as the rule of faith and conduct; and in the same way the writers themselves prepared their works and gave publicity to them, not simply or chiefly in order to make their readers accurately acquainted with the past, but to promulgate and recommend what seemed to them to be religious truth. Even the historical writings, both of the Old and the New Testaments, were composed with a religious object, to instruct and to guide, to rouse or to encourage, to exhort or to console contemporaries or posterity.

Up to a certain point it falls in very happily with our purpose, that the writers of the Bible made use of their narratives as the vehicle of religious truths; for it gives us the opportunity, without our having to seek it, of treating them in the same spirit. But, on the other hand, it throws many difficulties in our way. For, in the eyes of the writers, every thing was subordinate to their object, so that they often sacrificed what we consider very important interests to it — histori-

cal truth, for example. As a rule, they concerned themselves very little with the question whether what they narrated really happened so or not; and their readers were just as far from exercising what is now known as "historical criticism." If a narrative was edifying, if its tendency fell in with the tastes of the readers, then they called it true; while those whose point of view or whose sympathies were opposed to theirs called it untrue, and sometimes set up another story, purely invented, which agreed better with their ideas, in opposition to it. Thus a *legend* might serve the purpose of the writers just as well as the true account of something that really happened. This is why the Old and New Testaments are so full of legends.

Now, if our only object were to make religious and moral sketches, then these characteristics of so many of the Biblical narratives would give us but little trouble; but since we wish at the same time to explain the history of Israel and its religion, of Jesus and the apostolic age, the character of many of the narratives from which we draw, in the first place, makes it our duty always to apply a severe criticism to them, to see whether they are reliable or not, and, in the second place, compels us to prefix an introduction to our exposition of the narratives of the Old Testament, and another to those of the New, and now and then to speak of them in a different order from that in which they come before us in the Bible.

II.

We must illustrate this matter more in detail. We have spoken of "legends," and before we go on we must give ourselves some account of their significance and value. Let us take one that is not borrowed from the Bible as an example.

Do you know the legend of the Drachenfels?[1]

When the tourist, as he ascends the Rhine, has left Bonn behind him, he comes to the Siebengebirge. Right in front the Drachenfels rears its head to a height of nearly a thousand feet. The aspect of this mountain when looked at from below is very impressive, and there is something about it which works powerfully upon the imagination. If you climb its slope to enjoy from its summit one of those entrancing views far away over the river, on the ridge of the mountain

[1] That is Dragon Cliff.

you find a gloomy chasm. Ages ago, when all were heathens yet, so your guide will tell you, this was the den of a horrible dragon, the terror and the curse of all the country round, for its food was human flesh. That they might not fall victims to its ravenous appetite themselves, the inhabitants of the district were compelled to pacify it at regular seasons. So they made war upon the neighboring tribes and brought their prisoners to the monster. And this went on for many a year. But once upon a time they had taken captive in one of their marauding expeditions a girl of extraordinary beauty. They all agreed to offer her to the monster, in the hope that so choice a prey might satisfy its thirst for blood for a long time to come. The youthful captive, when they told her of her fate, gave no signs of despair or terror, but begged that she might be led to the murderous den just as she stood, with everything she had about her. Her wish was readily granted. Then she stepped, in her white garment, calm and resigned, up to the place of horror. There, roaring and breathing flames, the dragon shot into sight to hurl itself upon its victim. Its claws had already darted forth, and its jaws gaped upon the prey, . . . when she drew from her bosom a wooden cross, and held it up before the monster. At this sight — to the great amazement of the lookers-on, who did not know what the cross was, and saw nothing particular in it — the dragon drew back confounded, shrank together in convulsions, with a frightful howl, and vanished into its den, never to show its face again. It had sunk before the magic power of the cross, and in grateful joy the whole population of the district was converted as a single man to the religion of the crucified.

Here we have a German legend; and its meaning is not hard to find. It is the conquest of Christianity over Heathenism painted in living colors for us. The dragon is the Heathen religion which demanded so many human sacrifices, especially of prisoners of war. These sacrifices were generally made on the mountains, which were looked upon as the dwelling places of the gods. From this curse, which weighed heavily upon the land, the inhabitants were delivered by Christianity, which is represented by the beautiful young maiden, in her spotless garment, who steps boldly forward and puts the hellish power to flight by the sign of the cross. In this legend, then, we seem to catch the joyful shout of those redeemed from the power of heathenism, with all its abominations, and their grateful recognition of the heavenly purity and invincible might of the Gospel.

We shall use the word *legend* — originally the name of the highly embellished traditions about the saints of the Roman Catholic church — for every narrative which is not trustworthy, but is nevertheless given us as history. By this characteristic it is distinguished from the *fable*, the hearers or readers of which are warned beforehand, as it were, that the story is invented. In this sense the legend includes the *myth* — properly a Greek word, which means "story," and was applied to accounts of the gods, fables of animals, and all kinds of tales. As a rule, the words "legend" and "myth," as well as "saga," are used for one another, and in a different way by almost every writer on this subject. We shall call those stories *myths* in which the powers or phenomena of nature, represented as gods or men, are introduced as agents.

An example of this, too!

We borrow it from the Hindoo theology, from the songs of the Veda, which mention it repeatedly; and we choose this specimen because it is one of the oldest myths of mankind, and we find traces of it in the Greek and Latin mythologies, under the form of the labors of Hercules, as well as in the old literature of the Persians and Germans. In brief, it runs as follows: — Indra, the national god, keeps a herd of purple cows. Vritra, a wicked spirit with three heads and the body of a monster serpent, steals the cows and shuts them up in his den. Indra pursues the thief, breaks through into his abode, gives him a sound thrashing, and brings the cows back to heaven, while their milk is poured out over the earth.

The meaning of this myth can be given in a single word. It is the description of a thunderstorm. The purple cows are the clouds which hold the gentle rain. Indra is the god of day, and when the wicked spirit tries to carry away the clouds and so parch the earth with drought, he compels him to release them. But in giving this account of the meaning of the myth, we must bear in mind that what we now regard as poetical personification, was looked upon as a complete expression of the truth by the ancients; we must put ourselves into the position of men who saw the immediate activity of Divine beings in all the phenomena of nature. Imagine, then, the sudden approach of a heavy thunderstorm, as seen in mountainous districts. The earth gasps for rain. Prayers rise on high continually to Indra, the god of blessings. They seem to have been heard, for see! the clear-colored clouds rise above the horizon; they are the cows of Indra, and he is going to milk them to make the earth fruitful. They come.

Soon may they yield their treasures! . . . But, alas! they seem to be drawing off again. A dark shadow falls over them. Vritra, the serpent, whose breath parches the world, shuts up the cows of Indra in his gloomy den. A rumble of the distant thunder! It is the smothered lowing of the kine. Indra, the benefactor of mankind, advances to the battle, now alone, and now surrounded by the bands of howling winds. The thundering blows of the divine battle-axe may be heard, falling upon the cave. It bursts, and flames pour out from it. The trident spear of the serpent flickers through the darkness. At last the battle is over. The heavy shadow of cloud changes its shape, bursts, vanishes. At the same time the waters which it held imprisoned stream pattering on the earth below. Hurrah! Indra is milking the cows of heaven, and then, as the blue sky, he appears himself, in all the triumph of his glory.

You will see from these few hints that legends may be of very various nature and origin. Sometimes historical recollections play a chief part in them, and sometimes myths; here they have sprung up spontaneously, there again they have been expressly elaborated to give a visible shape to the author's impressions or thoughts. In either case they are of great value to us. It is true that they are not always improving; sometimes an unholy spirit speaks through them. That depends on the character of the men in the midst of whom they had their origin. But in every case they reveal something of the inner life of these men — of their thoughts, beliefs, hopes, fears; and now and then they make us acquainted with historical facts.

It stands to reason that we must go to work with the utmost caution when we draw our inferences from a legend, or use it as a contribution to our knowledge of the past. As a rule, indeed, it teaches us nothing about the period in which it places us, but it does teach us something about that in which it was invented, or in which it sprang up. We consult the legend of the Drachenfels in vain for the particulars of the contest of Christianity and its conquest over the German heathenism; but it gives us a picture of the thankful joy of the Christians on the banks of the Rhine, as they looked back upon the wretched condition in which they had lived as heathens. From the myth of Indra we can draw no knowledge of nature or of God, but it introduces us to the religious views of nature held by the Hindoos.

The same holds good of the Israelite and early Christian

legends. The accounts of the fortunes of the patriarchs teach us very little about a hoary pre-historic age; those of the birth and childhood of Jesus hardly anything about the first years of his life. If we took up the legend of Balaam in connection with the Mosaic age, we should form a thoroughly untrue conception of it; if we looked to the Transfiguration on the mount for light on the history of Jesus, we should be bitterly disappointed. The evidence put in by all these narratives concerns times long after those into which they transport us; so that they cannot be understood or consulted to any purpose until we are acquainted to some extent with the character of these later times, with the modes of thought, the diverging tendencies, the social or religious condition of the men in the midst of whom the legend arose. So, for example, if we are to understand the story of Balaam, we must keep the condition of the Israelites under King Jeroboam II. before our eyes; and the legend of the Transfiguration on the mount cannot be explained until we are at home in the disputes of the apostolical community on points of doctrine.

It would be very troublesome to us, however, and not a little wearisome to you, if every time we took up a legend we were compelled by anticipation to transport ourselves to an entirely different condition of things from that described in the narratives which precede and follow; if, to confine ourselves to the same examples, while in the middle of our treatment of the Mosaic age, we had to describe the century of Jeroboam II., or in the midst of the details of the life of Jesus to speak of the factions of the first century which followed him. But yet we must not treat such a legend carelessly; it must be explained in every point as thoroughly as possible. The way in which we have attempted to meet these difficulties is as follows: —

In the first place, we have prefixed a review of the history of Israel to our treatment of the narratives of the Old Testament — a sketch of the history of Jesus and the Apostolic age to those of the New. In this we have been as brief as possible; but in the sequel of our work we suppose you to be acquainted with the principal features of the history. You must look upon these introductions, therefore, as the rapid sketch in outline of the drawings which will be worked up afterwards when we come to treat of the separate narratives.

In the second place, we shall transpose some few of our

narratives, those, namely, which would compel us to make wide digressions if we took them up in the connection in which they are found in the Bible, but which are particularly valuable in throwing light upon the age to which they really belong. Thus, you would look in vain for the blessing of Balaam in the Mosaic age, but the narrative will find its place in the eighth century; and that of the Transfiguration will be considered when we are dealing with the Apostolic age, but not in the life of Jesus.

III.

Without intending it, we have enlarged a good deal on the unhistorical character of many of the Biblical narratives, and the influence which it has had upon the arrangement of our work. It really was a matter which could not be settled in a couple of lines. But it is possible that we may have led one or two of our readers into the mistake of supposing that it is the essential point in our eyes.

This is by no means the case, however. As we said just now, our greatest care has been to make these narratives speak to the heart and conscience, and in explaining them to offer wholesome and pleasant food to the religious and moral sense. It is our heart-felt wish that they may do our readers good, bring God nearer to them, and lead them to the knowledge of the highest truth.

Now, if any one thinks that these narratives can hardly serve such a purpose, because, after all, they are to a great extent, "mere" legends, he is under a mistake. When we ask, What took place? then, of course, a legend has much less value than an accurate account drawn up by an eye-witness, or at least a trustworthy contemporary; and for many a period of the history both of Israel and of Jesus and his apostles, we have to lament the absence of reliable accounts. But it is quite another matter if we use a narrative as a means of nourishing our religious and moral life. In this case its value depends entirely upon the spiritual stand-point of the composers, who lay before us in this symbolic form of expression their aims and opinions, their hope and fear, their love and their hate, their struggle after clearer light, their faith and their doubt. Now, the legends of the Old and New Testaments are the work of the Israelites and Christians, and may therefore serve in an

eminent degree to enlarge our horizon, to purify our feelings, to enrich and strengthen our inner life. For the Israelites stand before all the nations of antiquity in their grasp of religious subjects, so that Israel is rightly called the people of religion. And if even they, who only walked in the twilight, and so had very imperfect, nay, often very perverted ideas of God and their own vocation, deserve a hearing, how much more instructive and refreshing must it be to share the thoughts and feelings of the disciples of Jesus, by whom so much light has been thrown upon the problems of the inner life!

But —— what is it that we keep saying about the inner life? Reader! do you quite understand us? As we formed and settled our plan, as we spoke together about the contents of our narratives before beginning to carry it out, the fear crept over us from time to time that we might not be altogether understood by "young people." Are we running no risk, we asked each other, of rising too high or plunging too deep? The danger threatens us from more sides than one. It is true we do not imagine our readers to be children — to understand the Bible is anything but child's work! — but young people who have already completed their early education, and from whom we may therefore expect a certain amount of general information. But in dealing with the Biblical narratives so much has to be taken into account! May we not, without intending it, pre-suppose more knowledge on the part of our readers than they possess; greater familiarity with different branches of science, for example, with history and geography, with the disposition of society and the life of nature? We will try to escape this danger, and shall rather insert a remark or explanation which may be superfluous to some, than run the risk of being misunderstood. But, for all that, it is still possible that everything will not be clear to you at first, and that you will only enter by degrees into some parts of our work. In one respect — and it is specially to this that we wish to call your attention now — it will certainly be the case. You will not understand at first what we have to say to you of *the inner life of man*. This inner life is the experience of man, considered as a spiritual being: — all his inward consciousness of God and feeling towards him. Now, though you have a life within already, yet its development cannot be either high or varied till you are older. As our experience of life increases, if we keep in the right way — that is to say, if we not only grow

older, but braver and more earnest, wiser and better too — then our spiritual life is always growing richer. For you it is impossible as yet to sound the depths of the sense of guilt, or to climb to the joyous heights of the feeling of forgiveness and redemption; and yet without more or less experience of all this it is impossible to understand the Bible — even to grasp the true meaning and comprehend the full value of many of its narratives.

But what are we to do? Are we not to catch up and give out again those sounds of gloom and heaviness of heart: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and "Where is an offering for my transgression?" or to interpret the prophetic word, "The Lord hath spoken to me?" Are we to stifle the expectant cry, "The kingdom of God is coming!" and leave unuttered that glad sound, "Redemption and eternal life!" because all this can only find an imperfect echo in the hearts of young people? To do so would be to renounce the holiest truths! No! Whenever we tread the ground of religion and morality under the guidance of the Biblical writers we shall endeavor (of course under the simplest possible forms) to work out the deep and lofty truths of the spiritual life without reserve, even at the risk of being only half understood at first by many of our readers. Though these impressions and emotions may still be partial mysteries to them at their present time of life, they will surely suffer no harm from a moment's reverent contemplation of them.

Hereafter you will understand all this far better, unless the world engross your souls. God grant it may not, — but the danger is great. For our age makes great demands upon young people. Far more knowledge of the world, and a far more varied scientific education is expected now than formerly: life is more restless than ever, and the necessity of earning a livelihood, together with the natural wish to get on in the world, put an almost irresistible pressure upon us, which is always urging us forward. As the demands of society become more urgent and more numerous, the facilities for acquiring a wide and varied education are constantly multiplied. Who would not rejoice in this? But amidst it all the heart is still cold and poverty-stricken. Some counteracting power must be found, for we men have a pressing need of godliness, and the pulse of our spiritual life must beat strong. The great questions, "What am I in the world for? where am I going to? what does duty lay down for me to do or leave undone? how am I to be made what I can and must be made — truly

good and truly happy?" — these questions must emphatically be asked, and each one must earnestly seek the answers to them for himself; or else we shall sooner or later find ourselves unhappy in spite of wealth or sensual enjoyment, nay, in spite of all knowledge and external culture.

We must make ourselves good and pure, and it is no easy task! Nay, even if we strain all our own powers to the utmost it is not enough, unless we take advantage of all the help that lies within our reach as well. There are, no doubt, some men who would make young people believe that in matters of religion and morality they can manage for themselves and want no guides, that a man can really always do right if only he choose, and more idle talk to the same effect. Any one who says such things betrays his own deep ignorance. It is so terribly hard for us to become men whom the world has cause to value, who can retain their own self-respect, and on whom God can look down with pleasure, that our own strength is insufficient for the task. We must have strong help from without us. Unless our moral and religious sense is surrounded by good influences it becomes more and more weak and impure. Unless our spiritual life is steadily nourished we become famished in the end. If we have no guides in spiritual things we are sure to go astray.

The Bible is one of the most precious means of help in all these things. We hope to teach you to value it. The Bible, as the book of religion, is a treasure-house of truths, and bears witness to a nobler guide than any other you can find — to Jesus.

May the Bible, as it speaks to you of God, quicken your sight and open your heart to see Him in our time and in our life.

And God give you strength for the hard task of life which lies before you!

PART I.

THE NARRATIVES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

INTRODUCTION.

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL.

I.

ABOUT the year 1320 before Christ, certain shepherd tribes threw off the yoke of slavery under which they had long been crushed in Egypt, and spread themselves with their flocks over the peninsula of Sinai. They knew by tradition that their forefathers, together with other tribes, had come from the heart of Asia, from beyond the Euphrates, whence they derived their name of Hebrews, — that is, men from the other side, — and that they had wandered about for some time in the land of Canaan before they had taken up their abode in Egypt.

Besides community of interest, the principal clans amongst them were bound together by common descent and similarity of customs and religion. Some of these families — the heart of the tribes of which we are speaking — called themselves "the sons of Israel."

The manners of these Hebrews were rude. In religious, as well as in social matters, they stood as yet upon a very low level. Of an intimate national union, of civil government, of legislation, there was not a trace. Their religion was a motley polytheism. They believed in sacred stones and trees, and worshipped the powers of nature. They were disposed to look upon these powers under their forbidding aspects, as hostile to mankind, and under the names of "God Almighty" (El Shaddai), "the Lord" (Baal or Adon), "the Dreaded One" (Elohim), "the Strong One" (El), "the King" (Molech); they worshipped gods whose character is most clearly expressed by the symbol of a consuming fire. Bloody sacrifices, too, were the chief part of their worship, circumcision was practised, and even human sacrifices were not unusual. Besides this, the seventh day of the week, and the day of the

new moon, were observed as sacred. But, of course, no complete similarity of usages and opinions existed among these hordes. On the contrary, the differences among them were very considerable.

At the head of these tribes stood Moses, of the clan of Levi, whose name they had good reason to immortalize. Not only was he the soul of their confederacy in Egypt, but he also laid the foundation of their future national unity, by strengthening the connection between the tribes. This he accomplished, chiefly, by introducing the worship of Yahweh as Israel's god, and by giving out, as a fundamental code of laws, the so-called "Ten Commandments."

The name Yahweh is probably unknown to most of my readers. Jehovah has hitherto been used instead. But for some time past the conviction has become general that the name which Israel used for its god must not be so pronounced. Nor does "Jehovah" appear for the most part in the translations of the Bible. In the Authorized Version we almost always read "the LORD" instead of it.[1] For some time past the incorrect form of the name has been superseded by a better one in more or less technical works. Why should not we, too, follow their lead? It certainly looks rather strange, but we must some time give up the use of an incorrect form, and we soon get accustomed to an unusual orthography. We shall therefore write it — Yahweh. It is not easy for us Europeans to pronounce the name as an Israelite did, for in our language we never pronounce an *h* at the close of a syllable. The last vowel (on which the accent falls) must be pronounced like the *e* in "wet." What this name means, and where Moses got it from, we shall inquire further on.

The "Ten Commandments" probably ran as follows: — I, Yahweh, am your god. Worship no other gods beside me. Make no image of a god. Commit no perjury. Remember to keep holy the Sabbath day. Honor your father and your mother. Commit no murder. Break not the marriage vow. Steal not. Bear no false witness. Covet not.

The great value of this fundamental code lies, in the first place, in the fact that by forbidding every other religion, it paved the way to the recognition of the unity of God, and, secondly, in the close connection which it established between religion and morality. What else Moses did for his tribes-

[1] "Jehovah" only occurs by itself four times in the Authorized Version. The most important case is that of Exodus vi. 3. It is also found five times in proper names, as in Genesis xxii. 14.

men is unknown. The principal sacred object of his time appears to have been the ark, near which, or in which, it was thought that Yahweh lived.

For half a century, or more, these Hebrew tribes led the life of wandering shepherds in the Arabian desert. This name included not only the wilderness bordering on Egypt, but also the great steppes which lie between the Jordan and Mount Seir on the one side, and the Euphrates on the other. At the end of this period, assisted by the peoples of Moab and Ammon, who were related to them, they made themselves masters of the district east of the Jordan, and gradually pushed into Canaan, supported by Midianite and Edomite tribes, partly from the southern, but chiefly from the eastern side; and there they won themselves a home after a desperate struggle, under the leadership of Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim.

II.

During the first two centuries of the residence of the Israelites in Canaan, their history presents a scene of great confusion. National union can hardly be spoken of. It is true that the different clans which belonged to the same tribe were conscious of their relationship to each other; true, too, that the various tribes recognized more or less distinctly a mutual tie; but this feeling was not strong enough to make them stand by each other always. Yet there was pressing need of this mutual support, since their independence was anything but secured. For although the Canaanite tribes had been expelled, rooted out, or subjected, some of them gradually recovered strength, and gave the invaders a great deal of trouble, compelling them to treat with them, not always on very honorable terms, and in some places even making them pay tribute. Besides this, the Philistines, a warlike people, not of Canaanite race, who held possession of the southern coast, kept their neighbors, the tribes of Dan and Judah, fully employed, while other surrounding peoples — as the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites — took advantage of the feeble condition of the new inhabitants of Canaan to oppress them; and even marauding shepherd tribes, from time to time, poured over the country. Yet the mutual jealousy of the Israelite clans was such that they not only often left each other to their fate, but sometimes even fought against one another; and there was a special

want of good-will between the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh in the north and Judah in the south.

So it often seemed as if "the sons of Israel" would melt away amongst other peoples, and never gain an independent national existence. But a mighty power was slumbering in these tribes, and whenever their need was sorest this power was awakened by heroes, who called the tribes to battle in the name of Yahweh, succeeded in uniting several connected clans under their banner, and preserved the hard-pressed people from destruction. After their victory they generally continued to rule the people, or at least the tribe, which they had rescued; and since they bore the name of "Judges" as supreme chiefs, the centuries in which their deeds were performed are generally called the Period of the Judges.

It became clear, however, that the independence of the Israelites was not permanently insured by the rise of these judges, and that the tribes could never become a united nation on the strength of religious revivals and the personal authority of the men who offered themselves as leaders. Samuel was the last to make the attempt, and in spite of all his efforts the Philistines on the one side, and the Ammonites on the other, would have entirely subdued the "sons of Israel" had not the latter made up their minds to adopt the regal form of government. No doubt it cost them a great struggle to bend their proud necks beneath the yoke of an absolute ruler, but they were driven to it by necessity.

During the two centuries in which the wandering, loosely connected shepherd tribes had grown into a nation cultivating the soil and governed by a king, they had unavoidably mingled to a great extent, in many districts, with the Canaanites, who were nearly related to them and spoke the same language. They had much to learn from them, for the Canaanites were skilled in various arts and sciences; but contact with them was extremely dangerous to the worship of Yahweh. For the religion of the Canaanites had many points of similarity with the primitive religion of the Israelites. The worship of the Baals occupied an important place in it, and the licentious rites which were often performed in honor of the powers of nature had deeply corrupted the manners of the Canaanites.

In various places the Israelites were sadly polluted by intercourse with the Canaanites; but in general the worship of Yahweh, according to Mosaic principles, triumphed. The chief sanctuary of the country, that of Shiloh, was consecrated to him; and from time to time the offended dignity of

Yahweh was maintained, often after a very bloody fashion, and a rough penal code carried out against apostates. And yet, though Yahweh was always the chief god, all kinds of Baals were worshipped by his side, even by zealous contenders for his honor.

In matters of religion the widest freedom ruled. Temples and altars stood everywhere. There was no definite priesthood to whom sacrificial and expiatory rites and the consultation of the deity were entrusted. The priests who were attached to the great sanctuaries, such as those of Dan, of Shiloh, of Bethel, and of Beersheba, had a great deal of influence, and the members of the tribe of Moses (the Levites) were often preferred to others for the office of priest, if they could be got.

Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was the first acknowledged king of all the "sons of Israel." His reign was short, but not inglorious. He waged successful wars; and also appeared as a powerful and zealous defender of Yahweh's honor. But he was unable to keep himself upon the throne, for he had a quarrel with Samuel, and this seems to have impaired his power to such an extent that he was no longer a match for the Philistines, and after his death his son Ishbosheth retained nothing but a shadow of power. Through the influence of the party of Samuel, David the son of Jesse was now proclaimed king by the tribe of Judah (about 1058). After two years of civil war, Ishbosheth fell, and the strong hand of David grasped the reins of government over all the tribes.

III.

Samuel had left his people an institution out of which a formidable political power was afterwards developed, namely, the schools of the prophets. Prophets were men who, fired with enthusiasm, spoke as if inspired by some deity; and Samuel drew young men of this character together in schools, and kindled their enthusiasm by music and other means, and at the same time gave them such a training that they came forward in the name of Yahweh as advisers and as guides of the people, with ever-increasing boldness. The people, full of reverence for the men of God, lent them a willing ear, and their influence, therefore, was very great. David was their friend, and that of the priests as well. He began his reign by the conquest of Jerusalem, which up to this time had been

in the hands of the Canaanites. He then removed the ark to the same city, and took up his own abode there. Thus, he made his capital the central point of the religious life of Israel, and so bound up his own interests and honor with those of Yahweh. His ideas about this god, and the way in which he was to be worshipped, were, however, very imperfect and rude. He, too, invoked the Baals, and sometimes made frightful offerings to avert the wrath of Yahweh. Though music and poetry were cultivated with success in his days, and even by him personally, yet it is a great mistake to suppose him the author of most of the Psalms.

In consequence of a number of successful wars, David, in spite of repeated internal disasters, left Israel as a powerful kingdom to his son Solomon (about 1018), who succeeded, though not without difficulty, in holding it together. His reign was very brilliant. He kept a dazzling court, and his costly palaces, the magnificent temple which he built for Yahweh at Jerusalem, and the commerce in which he engaged, spread his fame far and wide. And as the Israelites from this time forward came into closer contact with a number of foreign nations, their horizon also was enlarged. Solomon himself is called the father of wisdom — that is, of the art of making proverbs and setting riddles — and from his time forward the "wise men" are a recognized power in the development of the national character.

But however brilliant, the reign of Solomon brought no happiness to his people. The cost of all this splendor was heavy, and the taxes were therefore oppressive. This fed the ancient jealousy of the northern tribes against Judah to no small degree. The prophets, too, were very far from content. Indeed, Solomon had not only set up a sanctuary for Yahweh, but had done the same for the gods of other countries too, and he troubled himself very little about the exclusive rights of the god of Israel, while even the temple itself, in the eyes of many, bore, with good reason, a decidedly heathenish character.

Meanwhile, by the erection of the temple at Jerusalem, Solomon had laid the foundation of the power of the priests who did duty there; for though there were hundreds of sanctuaries in the land, though no one thought as yet of limiting their number, much less of contesting the legality of the worship on the "high places," yet it stands to reason that the magnificent sanctuary, made illustrious by the royal presence, attracted a host of pilgrims, and gradually became the

central point of the worship of Yahweh. It is therefore of importance to remark that there was no image of Yahweh in the temple, and that the most prominent of the priests who were attached to the sanctuary were of the tribe of Levi. At their head stood Zadok.

After Solomon's death, the fire that had so long been smouldering burst out, and most of the tribes revolted from his son Rehoboam. Only Judah, with that part of Benjamin in which Jerusalem lay, remained faithful to the house of David, while Jeroboam of Ephraim became king of the northern realm, which is called the kingdom of the ten tribes, or of Israel (978 B.C.).

IV.

The northern kingdom was much larger than Judah, and when it came to a war between the two, Judah had generally to give way before Israel; but while the Judæans were always very faithful to the family of David, in the northern kingdom one royal house kept following another, and the constantly recurring wars with the Syrians were a great cause of weakness. In the form of their Yahweh-worship the two kingdoms were opposed to each other to a certain extent from the beginning, for Jeroboam I., in opposition to the worship of Yahweh without an image in the temple of Jerusalem, encouraged the adoration of this god under the form of a steer, and, for instance, set up images of this description in the great sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel. This gave great offence to many of his subjects; amongst others, to some of the prophets, by whose influence, to some extent, he had gained his throne; and to various Levites who did duty at different sanctuaries. Some of them even left the country in consequence of it. But the question whether the image-worship was allowable or not soon fell into the background, when, under the reign of Ahab, the worship of the Syrian god Baal gained ground amongst the people to such an extent that Yahweh was in danger of being pushed aside. This roused the utmost efforts of the prophets, whose activity has been recorded by tradition under the representative names of Elijah and Elisha. By their efforts Baal was defeated, and Jehu, who was placed on the throne by them, restored the worship of Yahweh to its former honor (884).

In Judah, too, the same battle raged, though not so fiercely, when King Jehoshaphat had allied his house with that of Ahab; especially when Athaliah, the daughter of the latter, had gained possession of the throne; but here the contest was soon decided in favor of Yahweh. The priests of the temple of Jerusalem played a more important part in this affair than the prophets, and, indeed, these last had by no means formed so active a political-religious party in Judah as they had in Israel.

In consequence of the victory of the Yahweh-worship over that of Baal, the conception of Yahweh's being became more and more exalted. If he had hitherto been a god standing by the side of others, he became henceforth for the guiding spirits among the Israelites the god of gods, who had chosen Israel as his people, and established an eternal covenant with them. At the same time, the moral demands of Yahweh were brought more into the foreground. This exalted conception, however, was the portion of but few. The mass of the people was far from embracing it, and even most of the members of the prophetic schools did not rise much above the common notions of their day, and were more like soothsayers than "spiritual men."

V.

The kings of Jehu's house (from 884 to 770) were in many respects admirable princes. Under Jeroboam II., indeed, Israel realized a prosperity it had never known before, and even after the fall of this dynasty some of Israel's rulers swayed the sceptre not without glory. But like so many greater kingdoms, Israel was unable to resist the formidable power of the Assyrians, who subdued first one province and then another, until at last, in the year 719, under King Shalmaneser, they took Samaria, the capital of Israel, and carried off the cream of the nation into captivity.

Judah, whose king, Ahaz, had called in the help of the Assyrians against Israel, was in consequence reduced to a position of dependence upon them; but Hezekiah again refused to obey them, and though the kingdom was thereby brought into great danger, yet Sennacherib was foiled in his machinations against Jerusalem.

At this period (the eighth century) there lived a number of prophets, whose words have been preserved to us in

writing, so that we are able to make out from them what were the ideas of the most highly developed Israelites of those days. They are: — Amos, Hosea, The writer of Zechariah, ix. — xi., Isaiah, and Micah. According to their conviction, Yahweh is the lord of hosts, the inaccessible and holy, who rewards every man righteously according to his works, and whose spirit rules over all things, both the kingdom of nature and the mind of man. These prophets do not exactly deny the existence of other gods (whom they generally identify with their images), and though their Yahweh is too exalted to allow of other deities by his side, yet they themselves can hardly have been clearly conscious that they really recognized only one god. In spite of Yahweh's greatness, the mount of the temple, Sion, is still called his dwelling place, and Israel is the only people with whom he has made a covenant, so that Canaan is also called "the holy land." These prophets knew or recognized no written law of Yahweh. Their god revealed his will through his servants the prophets. They did not show much reverence for outward adoration, sacrifices, fasts, and the like, and they always insisted on repentance and good deeds.

These prophets often came before the people and the king as advisers in affairs of state. In this respect they occupied a peculiar position of their own, for their belief in the omnipotence of the righteous and exalted god of Israel led them to declare that every alliance with a foreign nation ought to be rejected, that no yoke of a heathen oppressor was to be borne, and that the people must rest upon Yahweh's help alone, so that even preparations for war were a proof of want of faith.

As to the future, their conviction of the nation's sins led them to expect retribution from Yahweh's justice; but their faith in Israel's election and destiny inspired them with the hope of the restoration of the glory of the people of God, while they often looked back upon the time of King David as upon a golden age. For the most part, they expected the salvation of the people at the hands of a righteous prince of the house of David, and comforted themselves and others with the hope of his ascending the throne. This is called "the Messianic expectation." These prospects were all the more absorbing to the Israelites, inasmuch as the belief in man's personal immortality was altogether unknown to them.

But although these prophets, both by their words and their writings, exercised a great influence over the people,

yet they and their followers formed but a small minority. Over against them stood the mass of the people, whose representatives were vigorous upholders of the worship of other gods beside Yahweh, of image-worship, and of many heathen practices. Indeed, under Ahaz, through the influence of the Assyrians, there was actually a religious revival amongst the members of this heathen party, as we may call it, which showed itself in the building of Tophet, near Jerusalem, for the use of those who wanted to sacrifice their children to Molech, and in the spread of star-worship and the astrology connected with it. This movement was so powerful that even the worship in the temple of Jerusalem was modified by it.

The prophets, then, whose names we mentioned above, led the party of progress. Up to a certain point they were supported by the Levitical priests of Jerusalem, as well as by the "wise men," who were indeed distinctly at one with them, though they do not seem to have taken any decided practical action.

Hezekiah was the first prince who was guided in his conduct of the government by the prophets of what may be called the Mosaic school. He attempted not only to root out the worship of strange gods, but also to confine that of Yahweh to Jerusalem. With this view, he destroyed a number of sanctuaries of Yahweh, to the great indignation of many of his subjects. Besides all this he threw off the yoke of Assyria, and was very near bringing his people to destruction by so doing.

After his death the heathen party once more got possession of the helm of state, and raged under Manasseh and Amon against the upholders of the exclusive worship of Yahweh for more than half a century. But under oppression the latter had grown in numbers and in power. The prophets and the Levitical priests now pulled together. They made a clear statement of their demands in the Book of Deuteronomy: and in the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign (626) the religion of the country was violently reformed, as far as possible in accordance with their views. Henceforth no other worship was to be allowed than that of Yahweh in the temple of Jerusalem, where none but Levitical priests did duty.

As Assyria was now much weakened, Josiah was enabled to bring the northern provinces — at any rate, partially — under his power, and to regulate the exercise of religion there too, in accordance with his own ideas.

VI.

The reformation of Josiah is a turning point in the history of Israel, for the religious tendencies which have ever since distinguished the Jewish people then first gained the ascendant. But at the same time it caused, or at any rate hastened, the fall of the kingdom. For by the triumph of this party, the prophets who declared in the name of Yahweh's righteousness that his faithful people was invincible, acquired great influence, and carried princes and people with them. Josiah himself fell in a war in which he had rashly involved himself against the Egyptian king, Necho; and when Necho in his turn was conquered by the Chaldees, Judah became the prey of this powerful people, and their king, Nebuchadrezzar, finally, laid waste the city and the temple, and carried off the cream of the people into captivity (586).

This blow, and the misery that followed it, gave the greatest weight to the words of a Jeremiah and an Ezekiel, who, one in Judæa and the other in the land of captivity, had ascribed Israel's humiliation to the sins of the people, for which Yahweh, the only true god, was punishing them. Soon after the beginning of the captivity, the whole history of Israel was worked up, from this point of view, by a Judæan, whose history we still possess in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings. The principles of Deuteronomy, moreover, were strongly impressed upon the people by the captivity, and the belief in Israel's election, together with the hope of a return, still lived in the hearts of many. Hence, when Cyrus, the king of the Persians, gradually subdued the provinces of the kingdom of the Chaldees, he was hailed with the utmost joy, as the instrument in Yahweh's hand for the chastisement of his enemies, and the deliverance of his people. Yahweh's glory accordingly rose higher and higher in their eyes; and when Cyrus gave them leave to return to their fatherland, thousands of them availed themselves of his permission under the guidance of the governor, Zerubbabel, and the high-priest, Joshua, trusting that through the might of Yahweh, who had foretold all that had happened by his prophets, they were now about to establish the Messianic kingdom (538).

To this expectation, however, the event by no means answered, for the Judæans, harassed by their neighbors

(especially by the Samaritans), giving offence on every side by their national pride, sometimes, too, suspected by their Persian rulers, could only just manage to build and to preserve their temple and their city walls. Independence was not to be thought of; and when the Persian empire fell, their country passed over, without a blow or a struggle, into the hands of Alexander the Great (332).

During these two centuries, though no great change took place in the outer lot of the people, their religion in many respects underwent great alterations, and the work was vigorously carried forward on the basis of Josiah's reformation. But while the Judæans who returned with Zerubbabel had to wrestle with a host of difficulties in finding the means of livelihood, in defending themselves against their enemies, and in rebuilding their temple, there still lived in Babylonia many thousands of their brothers in the faith, whose interest in their people, their fatherland, and the temple had not died away, and who were earnestly attached to the service of Yahweh. Amongst them a priestly tendency gained ground, which had already found a powerful exponent in Ezekiel. During the eighty years which followed the permission to return, the disciples of this school had reduced to writing a number of laws relating to the distinction between clean and unclean, the celebration of the Sabbath and other feasts, the different kinds of sacrifices, the dignity of rank among the priests, the arrangement of the sanctuary, and so on; and Ezra, who came to Jerusalem in 458, brought these laws into operation, with the assistance of the governor, Nehemiah, though not without much opposition. The supremacy of the Law among the Jews dates from this moment. Those who were opposed to this legal tendency, and would not consent to the limitations imposed by the Law upon their freedom, found a place of refuge with the Samaritans and elsewhere, and a central point for their worship in the temple on Mount Gerizim.

In a certain sense the longings of the great prophets before the captivity were accomplished by the introduction of this law. Its object was certainly to make Israel a people sanctified to Yahweh. But in many respects what was now realized was something altogether different from what the bold champions of the Mosaic tendency before Josiah had intended. The very law itself, which became supreme among the Jews, under the name of "the Mosaic law," was in some points of heathen origin. Different usages of the

old worshippers on "the high places," elements of the popular religion, were incorporated in the laws, while the priests who drew them up did not stand so high above the religion of the people, as did men like Michah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezekiel. And, moreover, religious liberty was now, once for all, relinquished. Prophetic independence was not to be tolerated. The distance from Yahweh at which each one was placed at his birth was accurately defined by the Law. According to it the children of Israel had indeed a more liberal portion in the holiness of Yahweh than the heathen had. Yet nearer to him stood the tribe of Levi, amongst whom the "sons of Aaron" rose pre-eminent as priests, and at their head again the high priest stood as the holiest of all mankind. This arrangement of the priestly ranks is very characteristic of the sanctity demanded by the Law. Everything it required was precisely defined. Thus as the Law was introduced, prophecy at the same time died out. The Written Word took the place of the immediate revelation of Yahweh to his servants the prophets. The prophets were succeeded by the Scribes.

VII.

From Ezra's reformation onward the scribes exercised a decisive influence over Israel's religion, and also, to a certain extent, over the fate of the people. By their teaching, which they mostly gave in the synagogues, they impressed the Law upon the Jews, and at the same time elaborated what they called "the Tradition," and applied it to varying circumstances of life. The Jews who had stayed behind in Babylonia now came into frequent contact with the Persians, and as some of them had kept up close and continuous communications with their brethren in Palestine, more than one idea insensibly passed into the Jewish religion from that of the Persians, which resembled it in many points.

The people sympathized deeply with the scribes and their work; felt as much respect for them as for the priests, often even more; and vied with each other in glorifying the temple of Jerusalem and the law of the Lord. We still have the most beautiful examples of this in the book of Psalms, which, although older poems have found a place in it, is as a whole the hymn book of the second temple. Religion became more and more the special characteristic of the Jews and the great

mainspring of their policy. The supreme power in the country of the Jews — subject, of course, to the Persian governor — was lodged with the high priest, by whose side we soon find a council established, which is generally called by a Greek name "the Sanhedrim."

The incorporation of their territory into the empire of Alexander the Great exercised a powerful influence upon the Jews. A new world was opened to them by this event — the world of the genius of Greece. During the century and a half in which Judæa was the bone of contention between the Kings of Egypt, the Lagidæ, and those of Syria, the Seleucidæ — now subject to the former and now to the latter — it remained continually exposed to the influence of Greek science, art, and culture; so that it became a question whether the Greek would overpower the peculiar Jewish spirit, or whether the Jews would preserve the characteristics which distinguished them from other peoples.

While the Greek influence was making itself felt, the scribes and priests still continued their work. The former applied themselves to the development of the Law, the latter to that of the ritual. With reference to the efforts of the priests, the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah are especially noteworthy; for we see from them how they looked at the history of the people from their own point of view, and the means they took to give a priestly tinge to the past. Meanwhile the directions taken by the activity of the scribes, and by that of the priests, departed more and more widely from each other, until the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to root out the Jewish religion (167) roused all those who were attached to the customs of their forefathers to exert their powers to the utmost to prevent the absorption of the people of Yahweh into the nations, and the loss of its special character. The struggle was short but fierce. Mattathias and his sons, generally called the Hasmonæans or the Maccabees, stood at the head of the "devout," who fought successfully for the freedom of their country (138). In the midst of this mighty effort of the faithful servants of Yahweh, the Messianic expectations, which had for some time been pushed quite into the background, experienced a powerful revival. The book of Daniel gives us a clear insight into the beliefs that inspired the Jews in this contest, and into their desires for the future.

The event, however, did not answer to the high-wrought expectations of this book. The Hasmonæans did indeed

govern the land for some time as kings and high priests at the same time, and one of them, John Hyrcanus, conquered his neighbors, the Galilæans, Samaritans, and others, and even compelled the Idumæans to embrace Judaism; but after his death (106) his house was ruined by internal divisions, and in the year 37 the Idumæan (Edomite) Herod made himself master of the throne by the help of the Romans.

All was now over with the prosperity and internal peace of the people. A Jewish state did indeed exist for another century, but whether a prince of the house of Herod was nominally at its head, or whether the Roman governors exercised their power immediately, the Romans were always masters of the country, and the strength of the most fiery champions of Israel's liberty was wasted in hopeless struggles against their power, until in the year 70 after Christ Jerusalem was taken and destroyed by Titus. This was the end of the Jewish state. The tumultuous risings which afterwards took place were speedily, though not always easily, suppressed. As a Jewish city, Jerusalem was never rebuilt.

But Judaism was not annihilated by this. Since the Babylonian captivity Palestine had indeed been the central point of the Jews, and the temple of Jerusalem their great sanctuary, but even in the midst of foreign nations many thousands of them had preserved their peculiar national character, together with a passionate interest in their religion and their people. In Babylonia and Egypt especially there were flourishing Jewish communities which even exercised some influence on the religious development in Palestine. Now that Jerusalem had fallen, it appeared that Judaism could still exist, even without a political centre. The scribes — sometimes in peace, sometimes under persecution — continued to build upon the foundations laid by the fathers. Numerous schools of these learned men watched faithfully over the preservation of the Holy Scripture, and worked zealously at the more accurate definition of the Law. The results of their labors are registered to a large extent in the Talmud. So the influence of the scribes has preserved Judaism from destruction down to our day; but has too often resolved the religious life of the Jews into the frivolous observance of hundreds of religious usages.

VIII.

In a few pages we have run through a period of fourteen centuries. It has been a gallop through, and nothing more, just to get a general view of the whole. We shall now take different groups from this great field under closer inspection; and then a great deal that has seemed obscure in this sketch will become clearer and will spring into life before us. Just in the same way we have a general but rather hazy recollection of the character of a country through which we have passed in an express train; but only those scenes live in our memory, and make a strong individual impression upon us, in which we have lingered long enough to observe all their details.

The long history, of which we have taken a hurried survey, leaves a mournful impression at its close. It is true that we have watched Israel issuing from the night of superstition and immorality, and have seen how the light arose to some extent upon the people; but we have to close by dwelling upon the fact that this light was in a great measure quenched again, and that the efforts of the noblest of Israel's sons could not prevent the Law from stifling to a great extent the freedom of the spirit.

A sad result in truth!

But about half a century before the fall of Jerusalem, in the former territory of the ten tribes, there rose a man in whom the spirit of the greatest prophets and the devoutest psalmists lived again, in whom all that had been true and beautiful in the religion of Israel was restored and purified. Jesus of Nazareth wakened a new life. But although he sprang from Israel, his creation in the spiritual world belongs no more to the history of the Israelite religion, but forms the material of a new one.

Although in Israel, then, the light goes down, in Jesus of Nazareth it rises with fresh glory.

Schöpfungsbericht. 1881

See Max Müller, The origin & growth of Relig. p. 216.

See Records of the Past vol. I.

BOOK I.

THE GENERATIONS BEFORE MOSES.

In the Babylonian account see Theol.

CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION.

GEN. I. 1—II. 3.

SOMETIMES it happens that a child, not more than a few years old, perhaps, gazing out of the window at the trees and flowers or over the snow-covered fields, or looking up at the kindly moon and the twinkling stars, asks all at once: Why, mother, wherever does the world come from? The child's question is often asked by grown-up people too. We know that everything we see around us comes into existence in the natural course of things — that animals are born, and plants grow up from seeds; and children at school are taught much more about the laws of life and nature now-a-days than formerly; but this is not enough to satisfy us. We want to understand how things began as well as how they go on; and the questions: Where did the first egg from which a bird was hatched come from? Where did the first grain of seed that grew into a fruit-bearing plant come from? Where did the sun, that inexhaustible fountain of warmth, come from? What was the beginning of everything that exists? — such questions as these are always rising in the minds of men who take any interest in what they see, or reflect at all about it.

Now, the learned men who study geology and astronomy are seeking the answers to these questions to the best of their power; and, thanks to their industry, they are getting on from step to step. That is to say, though the questions which have the greatest interest for us — how was the matter formed

out of which everything is made? and, how did the principle of life in plant, animal, or man itself, come into existence? — still remain unanswered; yet the condition of the earth many centuries before human beings lived on it is revealed; the great changes which its surface and the various races of its inhabitants have undergone in the course of time are brought more and more to light; the laws of nature, by which our solar system is held together and kept in motion, are explained; and the size, the weight, and the distance from each other of many of the heavenly bodies are calculated. But the further a man advances in the knowledge of nature the more frankly does he admit that he knows comparatively little, and that there is much that he would gladly understand — such as the origin of things, for example — to which he cannot penetrate. Science is modest.

There is, however, another faculty which may be used to answer difficult questions, such as how the world was formed and came into existence, and that is the imagination which rests a great mass of supposed knowledge upon quite insufficient grounds of observation. The less knowledge a man has the more freely does he give the rein to his imagination: and, since very little was known in ancient times of the laws of nature and of the construction of the universe, it is not surprising that representations, not only of the history, but of the origin of the world, were produced by the imaginative powers of many different nations. The Greek name "cosmogony" is often given to these representations.

The Israelites, amongst others, did what has just been described; and the Bible begins with a cosmogony. I will tell you the story, a little expanded to make it clearer, and illustrated by other passages from the writings of the Israelites.

First of all, God made the heaven and the earth; that is, everything that exists. But the world was as yet in utter confusion, — a shapeless mass; earth and water were indistinguishable; and though the earth stood fast on its foundations, the water covered everything[1] so that nothing like trees or animals could exist. Nay, darkness covered all things, and as yet there was no light of heaven. But a power was there to create order out of this confusion or chaos. The breath of God hovered over it.

This state of things was not allowed to last, for God said,

[1] Psalm civ. 5, 6.

Let there be light! and lo! the light was there, and he pronounced it good. Then God gave the light the name of day, while he called the darkness night. So the first day went by.

When it was evening again and the second day had begun, God called a spacious dome into existence to divide into two parts the huge mass of water which made up the greater portion of the chaos. So he made the vault that, firm as a metal mirror,[1] rears itself high above the earth, and is supported by the mountains.[2]

Above this vault, which he called heaven, God collected the greater part of the waters which covered the earth; and then he enthroned himself above them, and made them the storehouse of the rain.[3] So the second day went by.

The work of the second day was continued on the third. Like thunder, God's voice re-echoed over the waters, which still covered everything;[4] and, lo! they were gathered together into the ocean, which washes the main land,[5] and all the other seas and watercourses, while the mountains rose up and a part of the earth was made dry. At once all kinds of plants came out upon its surface, by the divine command; the grass covered the ground like a green carpet, the herbs sprang up with their means of propagation, the fruit-trees with seed-bearing fruit. God saw that it was good.

When the fourth day had broken, glorious new works were made by God. There was light beneath the firmament already, but the heavenly bodies which regulate its coming and going did not exist as yet. God made them. He fixed the sun upon the firmament, and commanded him to give light to the earth by day; he appointed the moon as empress of the night, and then he spangled the vault of heaven with stars. The heavenly bodies were to serve as a distinction between night and day, as well as "for signs," that is, to announce God's judgments by their shining or eclipse, by their unexpected appearance, and by their relations to each other,[6] and for fixing the feast times,[7] and marking out the months and years. And when the heavens were beautified with these lights, then God pronounced it good.

On the fifth day the waters were peopled with fishes, and the space above the earth with birds. Wondrous sea mon-

[1] Job xxxvii. 18.
[2] 2 Sam. xxii. 8. Job xxvi. 11.
[3] Psalm xxix. 3, 10; civ. 3, 13; cxlviii. 4.
[4] Psalm civ. 6–8.
[5] Proverbs viii. 27.
[6] Jeremiah x. 2. Joel ii. 30, 31.
[7] Psalm civ. 19.

sters, serpents, and crocodiles were formed by God, and the waters teemed with fishes and other animals, while the winged creatures hovered in the air and soared up to the canopy above. Divided into many races, they added life to the scene of creation, and God blessed them and made them fruitful, so that they should multiply and fill the earth.

But however good the creations of the fifth day seemed in the eyes of God, the sixth was to crown his work; for on this day he commanded the earth to bring forth the four-footed beasts, both those which were to be man's domestic animals and the creeping things, and those that live in jungles and deserts, and beasts of prey, and wild game. Many kinds of all these appeared at once. Now the earth was ready to receive her master. Let us make man after our image! said God, speaking in the plural, as kings do; let them be rulers over all that has been made — the fishes, the birds, the four-footed and creeping animals. At his command it was so.

He made mankind — men and women — after his image, and gave them the blessing of fruitfulness, as well as dominion over all the animals. In distinction from the beasts, which had to feed on grass, he gave them grains and herbs and fruits for food. Then God looked upon all his work, and pronounced it good. And so the sixth day ended. The work of creation was finished. Heaven and earth, with all their inhabitants, were made, and God could cease from his creative work.

On the seventh day, therefore, God created nothing more, but rested; and to commemorate this fact he blessed the seventh day of every week and declared it a holy day, consecrated to rest.

There you have one of the Israelite representations of the creation of the world. We shall soon see that it was not the only one; but since the Bible opens with it, it has attracted more attention than the rest, and is even thought sometimes, by those who are imperfectly acquainted with the Bible, to be the only one.

We have many grounds for valuing this legend highly; but we cannot regard it as a faithful description of the formation of the world. It is a great question whether the Israelites themselves accepted it as such. At any rate, this opinion was not held by the compiler of the book of Genesis, who placed, as we shall see in the following chapter, a second cosmogony, of quite different purport, immediately

after this first; nor was any such idea in the mind of the poet who made God ask the censurer of his works:[1]

> Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
> If thou hast the skill, declare!
> Who took the measure thereof, if thou knowest,
> Or who stretched the line upon it?
> Whereon are the columns of her foundation sunk,
> Or who laid her corner stone,
> When the morning stars rejoiced together
> And all the sons of God shouted for joy?

For a long time, however, this cosmogony was regarded as a true history of the creation. But now the number of those who hold this view is always diminishing. And it is only natural that it should be so; for in times past, when people knew but little of the construction of the universe and of the former condition of the earth, they might suppose, in their ignorance, that the first chapter of Genesis gave an account of the real circumstances of the creation; but when the students of astronomy and geology had given an entirely different history of the earth, it was not so easy to accept this biblical account, and the old opinion could not be retained without doing considerable violence to common sense. People have wearied themselves in vain in the effort to reconcile the story which opens the Bible with what the men of science tell us. All kinds of crooked ways to this end have been tried; and that not only in learned books and in dry technical treatises, but in popular works such as Hugh Miller's "Testimony of the Rocks." The more talent this and other such works display, and the more charmingly they are written, the more must we lament that their authors have made all their powers subservient to the hopeless task of reconciling the account of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis with the results of scientific study; for it is impossible to gain even the appearance of success without doing injustice both to the biblical narrative and to the scientific discoveries.

What is the origin of this story of the creation? The celebrated German, J. G. von Herder, has suggested the idea that it is simply the description of awakening nature at the dawn of day, when the darkness of night yields before the morning twilight, making everything gradually distinguishable, while the animals begin to make themselves heard and seen, until at last man comes forth and goes out to his work. This is an ingenious idea, and, as we shall soon see, there is

[1] Job xxxviii. 4–7.

a certain truth at the bottom of it. But the belief that our account of the creation, in the form in which we have it, is a description of the dawn of day, is not correct; for how could any one, in giving such a description, make the sun, the moon, and the stars come into existence at the same time? The latter vanish out of our sight just when the former rises. The beasts of prey are made after the sun in the narrative; but really they go away and hide themselves as soon as the sun appears; and the Israelites were quite aware of this fact.[1]

Our narrative is not a myth, that is to say it is not a figurative description of anything that takes place in nature. Examples of such myths may be found amongst all peoples. Just read, for example, the following account of the creation, which arose among the Chaldees: Once all was darkness and water; wherein all kinds of monsters lived, over which a woman, Homoroka or Thanath, that is the ocean, held dominion. But the highest God, Bel, divided the darkness and cut the woman into two halves, out of which he formed heaven and earth. Upon this the monsters perished, for they could not endure the light. Then Bel cut off his own head, and from the earth, moistened by the drops of blood that fell, he made men, who are therefore endowed with understanding and have a share in the divine reason. This is in all probability a mythical description of the dawn of day. Before the rising of the sun the heavenly ocean rules over the monsters, that is the constellations, but the sun makes these latter vanish of themselves, and forms out of the ruler of the darkness, heaven and earth, since these two can be distinguished from each other as soon as the sunlight chases the night away.

Now, mythical representations such as this were not unknown to the Israelites. They, too, often thought of the heavenly bodies as of living creatures, as will appear from a glance at the passage from Job, quoted above, where the morning stars are placed in the same line with the sons of God, that is the angels. There are also some indications in the first account of the creation that the poet was acquainted with a myth not altogether unlike the Chaldean, though they are so slight as to be altogether lost in a translation. But the account of the creation we are considering is not, as is the case with myths, to a large extent, the product of unbridled imagination. It is indeed highly probable — and that is the truth in Herder's opinion combated above — that the mate-

[1] Psalm civ. 20–22.

rials of this narrative were furnished by a mythical description of the dawn. But these materials have been worked up by the author into an artistic whole. Probably several features of the old account, those for instance which seemed to the writer unworthy of the deity, fell away from it when it was thus worked up, and certainly one addition was made to it to serve to glorify the day of rest. We shall speak further on of the origin of the custom of celebrating the sabbath; but it is clear that the writer of Gen. i. 1–ii. 3 holds it in great reverence as a holy day, and endeavors to explain its institution from the fact that God completed the work of creation in six days, and rested on the seventh day, himself.

As a scientific product the narrative has no value; for the writer had only a very defective knowledge of the construction of the universe to go upon. A moderately good school-boy of our days could easily find him out in mistakes. That the earth is a ball which is always turning upon its axis, and at the same time pursuing its rapid course round the sun; that the whole earth, which seems so great to us, is no more, in comparison to the universe, than a single grain of sand on a sea-beach miles in length, and that the sun alone is a million and a half times as large — all this was unknown to the Israelites. For them the earth was a disk, washed round by the ocean, over which the firmament rose like a giant cupola, while sun, moon, and stars moved on the inner surface of this vault.

An Israelite could easily imagine that, in six days of four and twenty hours each, the earth was changed from a chaos into a dwelling place for beasts and men. But now-a-days it does not take much learning to know that many ages elapsed between the time when the firm land gradually appeared and the day upon which a human being first drew breath upon it.

We shall not easily be convinced that the sun and moon announce God's judgments, or that they were made for the purpose of fixing man's reckoning of time. But we must place ourselves at the stand-point of an Israelite who was unacquainted with the causes of many of the phenomena of the heavens, for example of the eclipses of sun and moon, and who regulated his religious feasts principally by the reappearance of the moon after it had been for a time invisible without his being able to account for its disappearance. We shall then find nothing unnatural in the rise of such beliefs, although they are altogether beside the truth.

If the value of the first account of the creation is very slight, when looked at from a scientific point of view, as a work of art, on the contrary, it is in the highest degree remarkable. If we compare our cosmogony with that of the Chaldees, which we just now glanced at, how far the latter falls short of it in beauty! The first chapter of Genesis has always been considered a masterpiece, and with good reason too! The tone of the narrative is simple and dignified. There are no extravagant conceptions, such as those of the Chaldee story, and this is certainly not the most grotesque which has been handed down from antiquity. There are no strange representations of the way in which God formed everything. God only speaks, and what he wishes to create exists. "He said: Let there be light! and there was light." That thought is nobly expressed!

The purity of taste with which our writer has composed his narrative bears testimony also to his reverence for God. The strange representations, which we meet elsewhere, did not rise, of course, from contempt for the Deity. The Chaldee saw nothing irreverent in the representation of the god Bel cutting his head off to make the dust into slime with his blood, and thence to shape a human form. It was only his way of expressing his belief that man is related to the Deity. We are in danger of being unfair towards those who express their feelings under forms which do not seem fitting to us. But yet there is something in these symbols which goes against our feelings. We can never speak of God in language dignified enough. Every representation, every description, is defective. And if we cannot keep silence on these matters, but must speak as best we can about Him and what He does, a sacred awe compels us to express our thoughts about God and his work in the simplest language possible. From this point of view the first biblical account of the creation has a refreshing tone, which raises it above many of the stories and poems even of the Israelites. It seems to cry in our ears: Let honor be rendered to God!

We must not suppose, however, that the conception which the poet had formed of God was free from narrowness. That God rested from his work on the seventh day is an unworthy representation, for God is always working. Moreover, it sounds very strange to say that man was made after God's image. What, we ask, did the writer mean by this? Did he think of man as like God in soul or in body? It admits of no doubt that he meant in soul and body both. Of course man's spiritual characteristics, his intellect, his capacity for

morality and piety, stood in the foreground of the writer's thoughts when he spoke of his being formed after God's image. But the Israelites of old times thought of God, as we shall often notice in other stories, as having a body like that of a man, and as enthroned above the heavenly sea; nor did they consider it impossible to see God. And so, too, our writer could think of man as being, even in body, God's likeness, just as a child is the likeness of his father.[1]

There are several things in the narrative which do not accord with our purer conception of God's being. We must not disguise this fact. If a man of our own time, brought up under Christianity, entertained such opinions, we could feel but small respect for the clearness of his understanding and the purity of his religious perceptions. But we must judge the writer by the times in which he wrote, and, so judged, he stands very high.

All the peoples of antiquity worshipped a number of superior beings, and made the powers of nature into gods. At first the Israelites, like others, stood upon this level. They, too, once recognized the existence of numerous gods, and worshipped the powers of nature and the heavenly bodies, together with a great variety of other objects. It cost them much time and great efforts to shake themselves free from these ideas, and rise to the belief in one God, who is exalted above nature, and can be distinguished from her. Yet in the first account of the creation we find this belief. From the chastened simplicity of this poetical and childlike description of the formation of the universe, a voice falls upon our ear: There is one supreme being, whose plan is fulfilled, who must be adored as the creator, whose work praises its maker. And if upon the earth man has dominion over everything that is created, and all is subject to him, it is because he bears God's image.

O Lord! how great is thy name upon earth,
Whilst thou hast revealed thy glory in heaven!
When I look on thy heaven, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars thou hast placed thereon,
What is man that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that thou carest for him?
Thou hast made him but little less than a deity,
And hast crowned him with honor and majesty.
Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands,
And thou puttest all things under his feet,
Small and great cattle together,
And the beasts of the field also,
The birds of the air, and the fish of the sea
That go by the paths of the seas.
Lord! how great is thy name above all the world![2]

[1] Genesis v. 3. [2] Psalm viii.

Chapter II.

PARADISE.

Gen. II. 4–24.

THE first book of the Bible is generally called by a Greek name, Genesis, that is, *Origin*. It is the first of a group of five books called, in Hebrew, the Thorah (that is, the Law), and, in Greek, the Pentateuch (that is, the book in five parts), the writing of which is referred by tradition to Moses, since the laws which make up the greater part of it were ascribed to him. We have already told you how little ground there is for this tradition, in the Introduction, and by-and-by we shall establish the point more fully.

Now, this book of Genesis comprises a great number of legends, all of which take us back to a hoary antiquity, and make up a kind of preliminary history of Israel. In speaking of the earliest generations of mankind, and especially of the tribal fathers of the Israelites, they give us an insight into the modes of thought of the writers, and on that account are very precious contributions to our knowledge of the Israelite religion. Besides this, they give us a certain amount of information, though of a very vague description, as to the origin of the Israelite people and the tribes connected with it.

The book of Genesis was not written by one man, but was put together from works of very different dates; works, too, whose authors by no means all stood upon the same religious level. This very chapter will furnish us with illustrations of the fact, for immediately after the first account of the creation, which we have just examined, a second follows, which by no means agrees with it.

Here, then, is the second account of the creation: —

When Yahweh made earth and heaven, no plants were to be seen growing upon the earth, and no herbs coming up, for as yet he had caused no rain to fall, and there was not a man to till the ground. But then a mist rose from the earth, and there came rain out of it, by which all the earth was watered. Then Yahweh made the body of a man out of the moistened dust of the earth, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. So man became a living being. Yahweh then made a garden in the eastern portion of the land of Loveliness (Eden), and

there he put the man whom he had formed. Then he made all kinds of beautiful fruit trees come up out of the earth, and planted the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden.

Now, from the land of Loveliness a river flows, which waters the garden and then runs off into four branches — namely, the Pison, which washes all Havilah, that is India, the land where fine gold and spices and precious stones are found in such abundance; the Gihon, that is the Nile, which runs round all Ethiopia; the Hiddekel, that is the Tigris, which flows through Assyria; and the Phrat, or Euphrates.

Into this garden Yahweh brought the man, to cultivate and watch it. He gave him leave to eat of all the fruit trees, except of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, for he was to die at once if he ate any of its fruit.

But Yahweh saw that it was not good for the man to be alone, and determined to make a being for him similar to himself, who might be able to help him. But first he made out of the earth all the beasts of the field, as well as the birds, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them, intending to keep as the name of every living thing the word which he used for it. And the man gave names to all the animals, but he did not find one like himself among them.

Then Yahweh made a deep sleep fall upon the man, and when he was buried in this sleep, he took one of his ribs, and, having filled up the hole that it made with flesh, he formed a woman out of it and brought her to the man. At once he recognized her as like himself; and, since she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, she must, he said, have the name of "woman" (the Hebrew word for "woman" is derived from that for "man;" as if we were to speak of "man" and "she-man"), and the bond between man and woman must be closer than any other, even than that which binds the son to his parents.

It is obvious that this account of the creation departs in many points from the previous one. In this account the earth is at first a dry plain, in the other the world was a chaos, covered with water. While in the former account God first creates the plants, then the animals, and finally man, here the succession is quite different, for the plants do not grow up until after the man has been made, and the garden in the land of Eden has received its occupant before the animals are made, while the creation of the woman closes

the series. There are other points of difference which we shall have to notice when we speak of the sequel of the two narratives. Thus, for example, in the first account of the creation, grain and herbs are given to man as food from the moment of his creation, whereas, according to this writer, he only eats fruits at first, and the use of grain for food is treated as a consequence of his sin. This narrative is far more varied in its coloring, and, therefore, more lively than the first, which excels in lofty simplicity. Of Yahweh, who makes a man out of clay, and blows the breath of life into his nostrils, lays out a garden, and forms a woman out of a rib of the man, we gain a very different impression from that of the God of the first account, who, throned above the sky and the clouds, calls everything into being by his creative word. Even the idea of man's being formed out of dust moistened by rain, and being made a living being by Yahweh's breathing into him, may seem rather childish in our eyes, but the idea of the woman being made out of a rib of the man strikes us as almost ludicrous. But, to avoid misunderstanding the people of antiquity, we must always bear in mind their love of clothing their thoughts in tangible forms. This representation, like so many others, is symbolical. The ribs lie in a man's side, and so the story that woman was formed out of a rib of man signifies that she ought to stand by his side. It is, therefore, a part of the same whole as the words which are put into the man's mouth when he sees the woman, in which he expresses the closeness of the marriage tie.

While the writer of the first account places the creation of mankind on the sixth day, without saying how many men were created or where they lived, here we have a detailed statement on these points. It is true that the writer does not say in so many words that all mankind are descended from a single pair, and indeed he soon forgets altogether, as we shall see by-and-by, that, according to his account, there were only two human beings upon the earth; but he only tells us about a single man and a single woman, and gives us detailed information as to the place of their abode. This was the land of Eden, between the four rivers that rise out of a single stream flowing through Eden, all of which he mentions by name. Two of these can be pointed out with certainty, namely the Euphrates and the Tigris; nor is it difficult to recognize the Nile in the Gihon, which washes the land of Cush, that is Ethiopia; and even the first, the Pison, is indicated with sufficient clearness by the further statement that it flows round

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the region of gold, that is India, from which it appears that the writer had either the Indus or the Ganges in his mind. It will be useless to look in the maps, however, for any place where these four rivers rise out of a single stream, and we must forgive the ancient Israelites for not being very well up in geography, and for imagining that the sources of one of the Indian rivers and of the Nile were to be found close by those of the Euphrates and the Tigris, for they had no maps in those days, and were almost entirely without the means of forming a correct idea of the position of the various countries of the world. But it is evident whereabouts the writer looks for the cradle of our race, namely in central Asia, on the table-lands of Armenia. There are other ancient legends of the Israelites which allude to these regions, from which they originally came.

It is worth noticing that one of the Persian accounts of the creation has certain points of similarity with this Israelite story; in the description of a pleasure garden, for instance, the position of which is defined by mentioning the rivers near it, and agrees with that of Eden. This has made some people think that the ancestors of the Israelites and the tribes related to them once lived with the ancestors of the Persians, at the foot of Mount Caucasus, and that there one and the same cosmogony was current amongst them all, but that when the tribes had separated from each other it gradually got so much altered that the stories made out of it only just betray their common origin in one or two features. This is quite conceivable; but it is also possible that when the Israelites came into contact with the Syrians and Assyrians they picked up a certain cosmogony from them, and that the writer of this narrative worked it up in accordance with his own ideas, and gave an Israelite tinge to the story. This opinion is supported by a certain trait in the narrative which is altogether un-Israelite, as we shall see when speaking of what follows.

The picture of the condition in which, according to this writer, the first human beings lived, is a matter of greater interest to us than the fixing of the site of their abode. They lived in a garden in the land of Loveliness. In the middle of this garden stood a tree — the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As yet they had not eaten of its fruit, and they were even forbidden to taste it. So they were not morally and religiously developed human beings, for so far from bearing themselves bravely in the good fight — the fight against sensuality — to say nothing of having gained the victory, they had not as yet so much as entered upon such a contest at all.

So they were happy in their ignorance. The Apostle Paul thoroughly understood the old story of Paradise when he said[1] that in contrast to Jesus, whom he called the second Adam, the first Adam was earthly, sensual. The golden age, therefore, or rather the golden day, with which the history of mankind begins, was a state of ignorance and innocence, soon succeeded by strife, by sin, by misery.

Each one of us has lived in a paradise like this: for as long as we were children we were ignorant, and, therefore, innocent. There is something so pure and sweet in this condition that it is easy to understand why Jesus loved and blessed the children. But the careless joy of ignorance which falls to the lot of a child soon passes by, for it learns before long what duty means. Its parents strive to teach it what is good and what is bad: and, as soon as it has eaten of the tree of this knowledge, its paradise is lost.

Chapter III.

PARADISE LOST.

Gen. II. 25–III.

THE same writer whose work we have just been considering continues his narrative as follows, and tells us how paradise was lost, chiefly through the guilt of the woman:

Happy in their childlike condition and their ignorance the man and his wife lived in paradise. They went entirely naked, but with no sense of shame, and did not eat of the tree that stood in the middle of the garden for fear of the threat that they would die at once if they did so. But one of the beasts of the field that Yahweh had made was cleverer than any of the others; it was the serpent. It knew the secret thought of the Creator, and betrayed it to the woman. For one day it said to her: "Has not God forbidden you to eat of some of these trees?" To which the woman answered: "We may eat of all the trees except the one that stands in the middle of the garden, for if we so much as touch that one — so God told us — we shall die." But the serpent replied: "That is not true. God knows very well that if you eat of

[1] 1 Corinthians xv. 45-47.

it, your eyes will be opened and you will attain to the knowledge of good and evil, and that will make you like God." Shaken in her trust in Yahweh by these words, the woman went to examine the tree more narrowly, and since the fruit had a beautiful and delicious appearance, her heart soon went after her eyes. She gathered, she ate, and gave some of it to her husband as well, and he followed her example.

Now it appeared that the serpent had spoken the truth, for hardly had they eaten of the forbidden fruit, when their eyes were opened, and they began to be ashamed of their nakedness, which they tried at once to cover, as best they could, with fig leaves fastened together.

But when, as the sun went down and the evening breeze began to blow,[1] they heard Yahweh, who was walking in the garden, drawing near to them, they were ashamed of their insufficient clothing, so they hid themselves among the trees to escape being seen by him in such a state. But Yahweh called to the man: "Where are you?" The answer was that he had hidden himself because he was ashamed of his nakedness. Then Yahweh replied: "Who enlightened you so much that you are ashamed of that? Have you eaten of that tree which I forbade you to use for food?" "Yes," answered the man, "the woman that you gave me offered me some of it. That is how it was." On this, Yahweh spoke to the woman; "What is this that you have done?" She answered in her turn that the serpent had tempted her to eat the fruit. Then Yahweh turned his wrath upon the serpent: "A curse upon you," said he. "I will degrade you below all the cattle and all the beasts of the field. Henceforth you shall creep upon your belly, and lick up the dust all your life long. And I will wake up enmity between you and the woman, between your offspring and hers. Men shall try to stamp on your head, and you to bite them in the heel." Nor did the woman escape her punishment; she was to bear children, and bring them into the world with pain; and while she felt herself strongly drawn towards the man, he was to be her master. Then God said to the man: "Because you allowed yourself to be tempted by your wife to disobey my commandment, the earth shall be cursed for your sake. It shall bring forth thorns and thistles for you; and, meanwhile, instead of living, as you have done hitherto, on the fruits of trees, you shall henceforth eat grain and potherbs, which you will have to wring from the earth by the sweat of your brow, until you

[1] After an amended version.

pay the debt of nature, for dust you are, and to dust you shall return again."

Then Yahweh, to enable the man and woman to come into sight again, gave them a covering of the hides of beasts, by which the whole body was clothed, instead of their fig-leaf aprons. But there was still one thing which Yahweh feared. "See!" he said to the divine beings around him, "in knowledge of good and evil man has become as one of us. Now, if he goes a step further and stretches out his hand to the Tree of Life and eats of it, then he will be altogether like us." So Yahweh drove man out of the garden of Eden to cultivate the soil out of which he was made, and stationed the cherubs with a glittering sword at the entrance of the garden to guard the approach to the tree of life.

If there is one Bible story more than another that has suffered from the artificial efforts of commentators, and been dismembered and distorted by them till it is hardly recognizable, it is this story of paradise. Treading in the steps of the Apostle Paul,[1] but going much further than he did, the teachers of the Christian Church have run up a whole block of doctrinal edifices on the basis of this story. They have taken it as history, and have supposed it to state that Adam and his wife were created in absolute holiness, that they were perfect in body, healthy and free from pain and violent passions, and that their souls in like manner were endowed with perfect knowledge of God, with the power of loving him, and with immortality. But they allowed themselves — and it was supposed that this too was written in the ancient document — to be tempted by the Devil, and so all kinds of disasters fell to their lot, amongst others death, and inability to know or to serve God. This corruption passed down to all their descendants, who are therefore guilty before God. This is called original sin.

Not a word of all this is to be found in our story. We have seen already that the first human beings, according to this description, were not perfect, since they did not even know the difference between good and evil. Moreover, a serpent does no doubt appear in it, but not a devil. Nothing is said of a fall, but only of progress. And, so far from death being represented as the consequence of the sin of the first man and woman, Yahweh dreads, even after their trespass, that their presumption may sometime tempt them to lay

[1] Romans v. 12. 1 Corinthians xv. 22, 45.

their hand upon the tree of life. According to the writer, then, they were not immortal before their sin, and did not become so after it.

Let us try to understand the legend of paradise.

The story about the loss of paradise is not altogether original. Certain traits in it appear in similar legends amongst various peoples, so as to make it probable that one and the same story lay at the foundation of all these sagas. Hence, doubtless, our writer borrowed, amongst other things, his representation of the monsters called cherubs, winged creatures in the shape of animals, griffins, which serve as the guardians of a treasure; for, as "cherub" is not a word of Hebrew origin, the whole idea is, in all probability, derived from elsewhere. We do not know how the original story ran. But the comparison of other versions of it, for instance that of the Persians, is instructive. "Mashia and Mashianeh" (that is "man and woman"), so we are told by one of them, "were created in holiness, and had received commandment from the supreme God, Ahura, to cherish good thoughts, to speak good words, to do good deeds, and not to sacrifice to the evil spirits. But after some time their thoughts were polluted by the Evil One, and they began to worship him. After that they wandered about for thirty days without food and in black clothes, and then they caught a white goat and drank some of its milk. This sin was followed by a still greater one, the eating of flesh, and then by another still heavier yet, for when they had discovered iron they felled trees. At last they worshipped the evil spirits."

From this story we can ascertain the moral standpoint of this Persian writer, in whose eyes drinking milk, eating flesh, and felling trees were just as much sins as idolatry. In the same way, from the Israelite story of paradise, we gain an insight into the ideas of its writer. We shall see presently that all the Israelites did not agree with him.

The story is an attempt to explain the conditions under which the writer saw mankind existing. He noticed round about him certain mysterious facts. In the animal creation, his eye fell upon that wonderful creature, the serpent, that goes hissing about on its belly, that animal of which man is the mortal enemy, and against the insidious attacks of which he must always be on his guard, although — for in the land of the Jews there were no poisonous or gigantic serpents — he can easily overcome it. That creature, thought the Israelite writer, is apparently under a curse, and he asked: How

has it brought this curse upon itself? Then he was struck by the sad lot of woman. That she could only taste a mother's joys at the price of so much pain excited his pity. But his sympathy was most strongly roused when he saw how she longed for the marriage bond, although it made her nothing but the slave of her husband. But even he was not happy. It was, in the East especially, a hard task to force her fruits from the earth. Why is this so? asked our writer. Why do so many weeds grow as to make the husbandman's task a burden?

He looked for the answer to these questions, and he thought he had found it in the supposition that the deity, angry with the serpent and mankind, had laid these woes upon them to punish them for their trespasses. The sin which had drawn all these evils upon mankind was the search for knowledge. The state of nature was far more simple and happy than the present condition of man. The infant danced naked in its mother's lap, with no sense of shame. Some peoples knew no clothing, others were content with a scanty covering. This condition of innocence was indeed lower in the writer's opinion than that in which man existed when possessed of moral knowledge and cultivation, but yet it was really happier. God surely had not intended that man should grow out of it. Why had not he been content with his humbler position? Why had he not left the knowledge of good and evil to God, to whom it belongs? Alas! man had striven after things too high for him, and he had actually reached that higher point, but only at the price of his own peace. His higher dignity had brought pain with it. Much sorrow accompanied the gathering of wisdom.[1] So the paradise of the childlike state was lost and gone.

In the description of the confusion of the man and woman as they stand ashamed — he throwing the blame upon her and she upon the serpent — great knowledge of human nature is displayed, and great talent in reproducing what has been observed. There is a fine point in the man's excuse: I was tempted by the woman "that you gave me," — as if he intended to make Yahweh partly responsible for the trespass.

But in other respects, and very important ones too, our writer does not stand high. In the first place, as we have already noticed,[2] his conception of Yahweh is defective. We must add a few words to what has been said on this subject already. Yahweh's walking in the garden, and clothing man

[1] Ecclesiastes, i. 18. [2] See p. 44.

in the garments made from the hides of beasts, are only such actions as we saw him doing in the former story, at the creation of man. We do not expect any one who makes such a representation of his god to think of him as the only god; and, indeed, our writer does not so think of him.

Strictly speaking, this follows from the use of a particular divine name. For, if there is only one god, why should we give him a proper name? As long as there was only one man, he was called "the man," as is the case all through this story, even after the woman has been created; and it is not till afterwards, when other men are spoken of as well, that the name, "man," is used as a proper name, Adam. So every one who recognizes only one god calls him God, and nothing else. It is true that the Israelites who had risen above the standpoint of polytheism, and recognized no other God but Yahweh, long continued to use this name; but this only shows the influence of the old custom of language. Our writer, on the other hand, unmistakably recognizes the existence of many gods; for he makes Yahweh say, "See, the man is become as *one of us*, knowing good and evil;" and so he evidently implies the existence of other similar beings, to whom he attributes immortality and insight into the difference between good and evil. Yahweh, then, was, in his eyes, the god of gods, indeed, but not the only god.

But there are other things to notice in this story besides the fact that the writer thinks of his Yahweh under a human form and only as one of the gods. These are to a great extent mistakes of the intellect; but it shocks us more to find that he ascribes very ignoble dispositions to Yahweh. For we cannot conceal the fact that the serpent, when speaking to the woman, tells nothing but the truth. Yahweh had really deceived the man and woman when he threatened them with death if they ate of the tree of knowledge. Not death, but the gift of distinguishing evil from good, by which they were made like to God, was the result of their tasting this fruit. Yahweh evidently kept them off this tree from jealousy, and he drove them out of the garden because he was afraid that by eating of the Tree of Life as well, they would become altogether like the gods. Now this idea, that the gods are jealous of the men who aspire to a share in their privileges, is found elsewhere, in some of the Greek writers for instance; but it certainly is not worthy of God.

Our writer thought with the prophet Michah,[1] that to be

[1] Micah vi. 8.

righteous and to walk humbly with his God was man's vocation. He could have repeated the words of the poet,[1] —

> Lord! I am not proud hearted,
> And mine eyes are not lifted in pride;
> I have not conversed with things too high and too wonderful for me
> Truly, I have brought my soul to rest and quietness;
> As a weaned child, without desire, lies on his mother's breast,
> So my soul is passionless in me.

And certainly there is something enviable in this rest of the soul. Nay, it may even be the glorious reward of the conquest over the earthly inclinations, and the subjection of our desires to the will of God. But there is also a humility of disposition, a freedom from passion, which is bought at far too dear a price, and springs from an unhallowed source. For if we do not long to go onward, — if we do not strain all our powers in the struggle for knowledge and blessedness, — if we allow needless ignorance and misery to exist in ourselves or in others, — then this contentment is the fruit, not of humility, but of idleness, which brings moral death in its train. The psalm of submission must be no lullaby.

It was not unnatural for an Israelite who saw how many woes, how hard a struggle fell to the lot of man, saw too that they were the result of the pressing claims of society, and that wants were increased by civilization, to look back sometimes with a kind of homesickness towards the state of nature in which men did not feel these wants and life was simpler. Any one who knows something of life can understand this well enough, for sometimes it is very weary work. We agree with the poet of the story of paradise, as he perceives and describes how the raising of man's rank brings with it a greater task to perform, and how he has to pay a heavy price for his noble privilege of being like God, and knowing good from evil. But we can by no means allow with him that this is contrary to the will of God. No, we are more at one with the poets of the first chapter of Genesis and of the eighth Psalm, who glory in the thought that God has made man after his image, has crowned him with glory, and has therefore given him dominion over all creation.

And so, however sweet that murmuring song may sound, "I have brought my soul to rest and quietness," the rousing war-cry of the sons of God rings back upon our ears: "No rest for us! work, search, learn, for that alone is life!"

The state of innocence is lost, the state of simplicity and

[1] Psalm cxxxi.

ignorance. We are no longer children. Are we to mourn over it? No. This condition cannot and must not last. But, whenever, as stained by many a sin and broken by many a sorrow we pursue our way, the state of childhood seems enviable in our eyes, then let us listen to the words of him who urges us indeed to become children once more,[1] but, also, to be perfect even as God is perfect.[2]

Chapter IV.

CAIN AND HIS POSTERITY.

Gen. IV.

BUT though paradise was lost — so we are told by the same writer — the first human pair still dwelt in the land of Eden. It soon appeared that the man had good reason to call his wife Eve, that is the *life-waker*, for she presented him with two sons, the elder of whom she called Cain, that is, the *gained*, "for," said she, "with Yahweh's help, I have gained a son, a man." The second was called Abel, that is, *evanescence*. The younger chose the shepherd's life, while Cain became a husbandman. Once on a time they both determined to bring some of their possessions as an offering to Yahweh. They gave of the produce of their labor, — Cain of the fruits of the field, Abel of the first-born of his sheep and goats, especially the fat of these animals; and with this last offering Yahweh was pleased, but not with that of Cain. We are not told how this fact was made known to the two sacrificers, but the idea probably is that Yahweh, who was with them in person, told it to them by word of mouth. Now, Cain could not endure being placed below his brother; and his sullen countenance, fixed on the ground, betrayed clearly enough how he was eaten up by anger. So Yahweh came to give him a warning. "Cain," said he, "why do you hang down your head in anger? Can you not lift up your face boldly if you do well?[3] But be careful! If you enter upon the crooked way, sin lies in wait for you, as a beast of prey crouching at the door of your house; but you must master it." Cain, however,

[1] Matthew xviii. 1–3. [2] Matthew v. 48. [3] After an amended version.

far from attending to this good advice, dogged the footsteps of his brother,[1] and as soon as ever they were in the field together, struck him dead.

Then Yahweh came again to Cain and asked: "Where is Abel, your brother?" And Cain answered: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" But Yahweh replied: "What have you done? The blood of your brother cries to me from out of the ground. Now, listen: Be thou cursed, and cast out from the land which has opened its mouth to take up the brother's blood which you have spilt. When you work upon it, it shall not put forth its strength to serve you. For you it shall be unfruitful, and so you shall roam and wander up and down the earth."

Then Cain, terrified by this curse, cried out: "The punishment is too hard to bear! See, you have banished me from this land, and will never think of me again; and likely enough as I roam and wander over the earth, any one that happens to meet me will kill me." But Yahweh answered him: "Yes! but to avert that danger, Cain shall be avenged sevenfold." Moreover, to protect him as far as possible, Yahweh fixed upon a sign by which any one who was about to raise his hand against Cain should be warned.

As soon as his sentence was pronounced he left Eden, where Yahweh dwelt, and, after journeying eastwards, settled in the land of wandering (Nod). There his wife presented him with a son, after whom he called the town which he founded Enoch. Enoch had a son Irad, and Irad a son Mehujael, who was the father of Methusael and the grandfather of Lamech.

Now Lamech took two wives, called Adah and Zillah, whose children were very celebrated men. Adah's sons were Jabal and Jubal, the first of whom instituted the wandering shepherd life, while the second was the discoverer of various musical instruments, such as the lyre and the pipe. Zillah gave birth to Tubal-cain, the copper and iron smith, and his sister, Naamah.

Then Lamech, proud of his metal weapons, said to his wives:—

Adah and Zillah! hear my voice,
Ye wives of Lamech hearken to my speech!
Truly I slew a man for a wound,
And a lad for a stripe he had given me!
If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
Then Lamech seven and seventy.

[1] After an amended version.

After Abel's death, and Cain's banishment from Eden, Eve had a third son there, and she gave him the name of Seth, that is the *given*, "because," said she, "God has given me a compensation for Abel." Seth's son was called Enos, and in his days the worship of Yahweh began.

This story is not only from the same hand as the previous one, but is so closely connected with it that the same idea plays a chief part in both. As we have seen, the writer of the story of paradise considered the state of nature, that is, the condition of ignorance and of the innocence which goes along with it, as the state of man which God willed, and he explained man's struggle for something higher as a consequence of sin. In the story of Cain and his posterity he worked out this notion further. He pointed out the progress made by men in every direction; how they had invented musical instruments and discovered the art of forging copper and iron; how towns had been built by them, and the wandering shepherd life established too. But *what* men had invented all this? The Cainites, the posterity of the murderer of his brother, the exiles from Eden, where the worship of Yahweh was not introduced till their connection with that land of paradise had been severed. And what advantage had this progress of the Cainites brought with it? What fruit had they gathered from this art of bending the hard metals into the form that pleased them? None. Surely it had taught them how to make a sword, and to tip their arrows and spears? Yes; and the discovery made them all the more savage and overweening. Strong in the possession of copper and iron, Lamech could swear sevenfold vengeance on any one who should kill him, for his sons would avenge him. And woe to the man who wounded him, for even that offence would meet the penalty of death! That is what comes of all this progress and knowledge, thought the writer. Such was the course of man after the loss of his innocence. The history of Adam's eldest son and of his race begins with a murder and ends with a wild song of vengeance.

This is the main idea of the story which we are now to examine in detail. It would be an important addition to our knowledge of antiquity if we knew the source from which the writer took the names with which he connected the various inventions of which he speaks, and the original meaning of these names, which are met with in the following

story in quite a different order. The writer treats them as men, but it does not follow that that is what they really were.

If asked: What else can they have been? we might answer: Perhaps they were the names of gods, to whose teaching the origin of these occupations or the knowledge of these arts was ascribed. This is not unlikely. Several of the names are to be found amongst other nations as well as amongst the Israelites. Thus Jabal is a good deal like the name of the Greek and Roman god, Apol(lo), and Tubal-cain is the Hebrew pronunciation of the name pronounced Vulcan by the Romans, and used by them for the smith of the gods; while Set was an Egyptian god. Moreover, it quite agrees with the ancient usage, which we find among all kinds of nations, to attribute the earliest discoveries and inventions, and everything that brought about a great change in human life, to the immediate revelation of a deity. No wonder! Who first built a town it was surely impossible to say; for necessity must gradually have forced people to hedge or wall-in their dwelling-places as a defence against their enemies, whether beasts or men. Gradually some of them would begin to wander round about to look for pastures for the beasts which they had tamed and used as domestic animals. The possibility of producing various sounds by striking or blowing upon strings under tension, and upon the horns of animals or lengths of reed, was certainly often noticed before, step by step, man learned to make musical instruments. The case is the same with forging. Since it is natural to men who are at a low stage of development, and have not been accustomed to think much, to deify all the powers and gifts of nature, and even individual objects, it is not unnatural that they should worship a god "Copper-smith," or "Shepherd-life," or "City-building." And it is very natural that they should attribute to the revelation of the Sun, or of some other god, their knowledge of all kinds of useful arts.

We ought, however, to be very cautious in venturing upon guesses such as these; for it is almost like groping about in the dark to speak of such ancient times, and the thoughts of the men who lived in them. There are many other ways in which these names may have become connected with such inventions and social changes. They may have been names of men or tribes which were afterwards deified by certain peoples. We must be all the more cautious, as the meaning of the names is generally unknown to us, nor can we even

say from what language they are derived. The writer certainly gives us translations of several of them, but they rest apparently upon nothing but conjecture, for Seth cannot really mean "the given," nor Cain, "the obtained." On the other hand, the names Abel and Nod, as well as Adam, Eve and Eden, are pure Hebrew words, and were probably invented by the writer himself. The Israelites were certainly no masters of the art of translating foreign names, whether they had come down to them from former days, or had been transplanted from other lands. None of the translations, which appear in great numbers in the book of Genesis and elsewhere, have any value, except in so far as they show us what the writers thought about the names in question. In future we shall not notice the incorrectness of their derivations, except when there is some important reason for doing so.

However much we should like to know the origin and the meaning of these names, and the way in which they came to the knowledge of our writer, we must be content to give the question up; and fortunately our ignorance does not prevent our reading the writer's heart, for whatever may have been the original meaning of these names, it is evident that in his eyes they were simply the names of men. As we are not considering a historical record, we need not stop to ask such questions as, "How did Cain come by a wife?" "How can he have been afraid that people would kill him, when as yet there were none?" "How can he have built a city, when he had only one son?" We must examine the writer's ideas about the god he worshipped, about his will, and the way in which he revealed it.

As a matter of course we find the same narrow conception of Yahweh here that we noticed in the story of paradise. It is not, indeed, expressly stated that the reason why Yahweh preferred Abel's present to Cain's was, that the one brought him a sacrifice of flesh, while the other only consecrated fruits of the field to him. It is possible that the writer had that higher conception of what constitutes the value of a sacrifice, which led one of the Christians of the time of the Apostles to explain that Abel brought a better sacrifice than Cain's by faith.[1] This is possible, for the idea was familiar to some of the Israelites; but it is not likely. At least the account of Yahweh's acceptance of the one sacrifice and rejec-

[1] Hebrews xi. 4.

tion of the other follows so close upon the mention of the nature of the gifts that the difference between them really seems to have been taken into account in the sentence: nor did the Israelites ever offer a sacrifice of grain or anything of that kind, except when they had not an animal to give.[1] But, however this may be, we see that his conception of his god was not very exalted, from Yahweh's giving immediate expression to his approval or disapproval of the sacrifices offered him, and holding a conversation with Cain, and still more from the fact that he lives in Eden only, so that an exile from that land can no longer share his protection.

Equally childlike is the writer's idea of nature. She feels for man, and is angry with his sin. No doubt, as we read in the story that the voice of the blood spilt by a brother's hand cries out for vengeance, and that the ground which has drunk it up refuses to bear fruit for the murderer, we are inclined to consider these expressions as metaphorical, and to regard them as poetical forms of speech. So, in exalted style, we too speak of a sin "which cries to heaven," and say that things are "enough to make the angels weep." Such expressions are figurative; but, when they were first used, they were figurative only in a very different sense from that in which they are so now. To us they are metaphorical, but to the men of primeval times they were a full expression of the truth. In those days full grown people thought, as children do still, that everything was alive. Their idea was that blood literally cried out for vengeance, and that the earth itself punished the murderer. How could Yahweh have known that Cain had slain his brother, if his blood had not revealed it? Hence the popular belief, not uncommon among the Israelites and others, that when innocent blood was spilt, it cried for vengeance louder if it remained uncovered, than if it had sunk into the ground and was hidden by earth.[2]

But, however childlike we may consider the writer's ideas of nature and of Yahweh's character, they did not prevent his feeling the deepest reverence for his god, and ascribing great power to him. Why was such a barbarous law of vengeance observed among the Cainites? Why must a murder be avenged amongst them sevenfold? The answer he gives to this question is very clear. In the land of the Cainites, the land of Wandering, Yahweh did not dwell. Cain was withdrawn from his eye. In consequence, there was less security there, and human life was in greater danger

[1] Leviticus v. 11. [2] Job xvi. 18. Ezekiel xxiv. 7, 8.

than in the place where Yahweh dwelt, and could protect his favorites. It is true that although Yahweh did not follow Cain into the land of exile, yet he exercised some power even there. For there, too, he appointed signs; there, too, the leaves rustled ominously, or the light of the sun was reddened, or a night-bird gave a threatening screech, when any one would raise his hand against the life of a fellow man. But, as Yahweh could not prevent the murder there, the law of vengeance must be made all the fiercer.

A lively gratitude for his privileges as an Israelite evidently filled the soul of this writer. For in mentioning the cruel customs of those outside Eden, within which land alone were prayers to Yahweh offered, he was doubtless quite aware that this bloody law of vengeance did actually exist among the peoples who lived outside Canaan. In his estimation, Canaan was an Eden; it is true that Paradise was lost, and even there the earth bore thorns and thistles, but yet it was well with those in the holy land. There the just and gentle law of compensation was acknowledged. There the rule, "Eye for eye, stripe for stripe," was observed, and no further punishment was inflicted on the evil doer. Outside Canaan, on the other hand, among hordes of barbarians, this limitation of vengeance did not exist; there, if the injured one were strong enough, a sevenfold payment of the debt was sometimes exacted. For this milder law of punishment, Israel was indebted to his god, who was honored in Canaan alone. Where Yahweh did not rule, a savage code of laws was necessary for the protection of human life.

In his views of social life, our writer cannot be acquitted of one-sidedness. We may, perhaps, consider him a man of old-fashioned views, looking with suspicion on all progress in arts and sciences, and turning with a kind of home-sickness towards a simpler mode of life. He seems to have thought that this style of life existed chiefly among the inhabitants of villages, as he finds a place both for the wandering life of the shepherd tribes and the building of cities among the practices introduced by the exiles from Eden, the descendants of the murderer of his brother. He was certainly a townsman therefore, for any one who is acquainted with the country knows very well that there is just as much immorality there as there is in the towns. Moreover, our writer believed that a greater purity and simplicity than characterized life in his days had been the portion of the earliest generations of man-

kind, but had been lost by the development of arts and sciences. Was he right in this opinion? Was the old state of society really the best? Surely not. It is not easy for us, who have known from infancy so many means of sustaining life and giving it a grace, altogether to transport ourselves to the position of men of the earliest ages, when it was considered a new idea, quite a valuable discovery, to throw a wall round a few houses that stood near together; when the use of copper and iron was as yet unknown, and there were no musical instruments, not even a shepherd's pipe or an ox-horn. But ancient and modern travellers have certainly told us enough of the life of the races who are still at this low stage of development, and the diligence of antiquaries has certainly made out enough from the remains of the dwellings, weapons, food, furniture and tombs of the men of prehistoric times, to prevent our wishing their days to come back again to us.

The earliest period from which sufficient remains have as yet been discovered to enable us to form any idea of human life at the time, is called the Age of Stone, because wood and stone were the only substances then known, out of which implements could be made. Next came the Age of Bronze, in which this mixture of tin and copper was used to make implements, weapons, musical instruments and ornaments. Finally, the Age of Iron succeeded. It is easy to imagine how much toil it must have cost the men of this Age of Stone, or even of Bronze, to make their houses and boats. Even in the Age of Stone, it is true, many arts were practised, both in our quarter of the globe and elsewhere. Enough was known to enable people to construct regular villages upon stakes in the middle of lakes; they cultivated the soil, and kept great flocks and herds; nay, even at that early age, the art of weaving and plaiting was understood, and a bartering trade was carried on with distant tribes. But, for all that, they must often have felt a pinching want of the necessaries of daily life. No doubt the population of the different countries was thin, the mortality very high, and life utterly comfortless.

With the discovery of the art of forging iron, a new path of progress was opened up. As man's resources increased, he was better and better able to work out his destiny, and become the lord of nature. Life grew richer and fuller, less monotonous and more interesting. As better means were discovered for forcing nature to yield her treasures, people were enabled to live together in ever greater numbers. It is

true that the instruments of destruction, so often turned by men against each other, became more terrible, and their mutual conflicts therefore bloodier; but, on the other hand, this very fact drove them to come to some mutual understanding, to found states and to make laws.

It cannot be denied that music, for instance, often causes mischief, that it is often used to rouse impure ideas, that the multiplication of the means of enjoyment, of which this is but one, has often been a snare to mankind. But are we, therefore, to wish that time back again when men were so incapable and uncultivated as still to be unable to practise any of the arts? Just as if these arts could not raise holy as well as evil thoughts!

Everything can be abused; nay, everything is abused. But the fact that God's gifts are often applied to a bad purpose must not tempt us to declare that they are the fruits of sin.

So the writer of the story of the Cainites is altogether wrong, when he brands social progress as the source of moral degradation. Those who ranked the first discoverers among the gods were nearer the mark than he; for it is in truth God's will that mankind should raise themselves out of the state of ignorance, that is of barbarism. Progress in science and art is not indeed the highest of which man is capable, and it may be coupled with growing immorality; but, for all that, it is a good gift, and he that works earnestly for its sake does something towards increasing human happiness, and, in so far, is doing the will of God. Culture, indeed, is not devoutness, but still less is the absence of culture. Science and art alone do not make a man all that he ought to be, but ignorance and insensibility to what is beautiful are surely no quickeners of piety, but are great blemishes on the character of any man, and are often ruinous in their effects.

But, however one-sided may be the view of life which our writer takes, there is something in his one-sidedness which makes us respect him. For his reason for looking so unfavorably upon social progress is, that he sees a danger to morality in it. He objects both to life in cities and to life in tents; to the first, no doubt, because of the greater luxury which generally accompanies it; to the last, because of the rudeness and fierceness of the wandering tribes. He curses the invention of iron-founding, for the warrior, emboldened by the possession of a sword, has small respect for human life. Music is an unholy thing to him, for are not drinking bouts graced by it? Although these views are mistaken, yet

they show that a deep moral feeling filled the writer. Horror of sin, of luxury, and of cruelty dictate his words, and he is drawn towards simplicity and purity of life.

He has a quick eye, too, in tracing the first movements of sin in the heart of man. His Cain is drawn by the hand of a master. Jealousy makes him cast down his sullen countenance; for the man whose heart is not right cannot look the world in the face. This evil disposition is not checked. Sin leaps upon him. He becomes a murderer. He gives a surly answer when he is questioned by God about what he had done; just as we always notice, both with children and grown-up people, that when they have anything on their conscience which disturbs their peace of mind, but for which they are not penitent, they try to carry it off with a bullying air, as if they intended to shout down God and man, just as they try to silence their own conscience. "I don't know where my brother is. Am I my brother's keeper?" So speaks the murderer, but as soon as he hears his sentence, his audacity breaks down and is succeeded by the utmost terror. No wonder! His sin cries to heaven. The earth accuses him. Abel's blood still speaks, even after he has been murdered, and cries out, "Vengeance![1] Vengeance on the murderer of his brother!" And he goes forth upon his wanderings, bereft of God's guidance, and becomes the father of a godless offspring, whose posterity is ever more and more godless yet. So misery treads upon the heel of sin. In Eden, meanwhile, the places of the murderer and his victim are filled again, and before long Yahweh is worshipped there, though the murderer's race has forfeited his blessings.

Chapter V.

THE PATRIARCHS BEFORE THE FLOOD.

Gen. v.

THE story of the Cainites is followed in the book of Genesis by a family tree, drawn up by the same writer who gave us the first account of the creation, a reference to which occurs at its commencement. It runs as follows: These are

[1] Hebrews xi. 4, xii. 24.

the family archives of Adam. When God made men, he made them after his own image. Male and female created he them, and he blessed them, and gave them the name of "man" (Adam). Now, when Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years he begat a son after his likeness, as it were a copy of himself, and called him Seth. After his birth he lived eight hundred years, and had sons and daughters. So altogether Adam was nine hundred and thirty years old. Then he died.

In this style the narrative goes on. The same particulars are given us concerning Adam's eldest son; viz., his age when his first son was born, how long he lived after that event, and how old he was when he died. The same information is given us of his descendants, one after another, of Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah; but the death of Noah is not mentioned here. The monotonous series is only broken by the story that Enoch walked with God three hundred years after the birth of his son, and "was not, for God took him," and the statement that Noah's father gave him his name "because he must comfort us concerning our work and the painful labor of our hands, because of the ground which is cursed by Yahweh." This addition, from which we learn that the word Noah was understood by the writer to mean "comforter," is not from the same hand as the family register, and was inserted afterwards.

The men of the age before the flood are usually called forefathers, or patriarchs (that is, *chief fathers*), but this last word is more specially used for the ancestors of the Israelites, Abram and his sons. All these patriarchs before the flood are represented as reaching a great age; for Enoch, who died youngest of them all, was three hundred and sixty-five years old, and Methuselah, who reached the greatest age, was nine hundred and sixty-nine.

The last-mentioned patriarch is usually called Methusalem, but the cause of this has never been explained. It is easy to understand why we always speak of Eve and Abel, instead of Chavvah and Habel, as the names stand in the Hebrew, for in these cases and many others we follow the usage of our own translation of the Bible, which, in its turn, often follows the Greek and Latin versions; but in this case the old translations write Mathusala clearly enough, and the same spelling is adopted in our Bibles in the only place where the name occurs in the New Testament,[1] while in the Old Testament it is always

[1] Luke iii. 37.

spelt as above, — Methuselah. The spelling Methusalem is very old, and is found as early as the beginning of the Christian era, but it is curious that it should have had so much influence over the language of the people as to supersede the pronunciation supported by the written tradition. This, however, in passing.

These names suggest more interesting subjects for our consideration. No one who has read them carefully and remembers the particulars of the preceding story can fail to notice that almost the same names occur in both narratives. Not only do both writers mention Adam, Seth, and Enos, but Enoch and Lamech too appear both among the Cainites and among the descendants of Seth, while Cain and Cainan, Irad and Jared, Mehujael and Mahalaleel, Methusael and Methuselah, bear so close a resemblance to each other (still closer in the original than in our Authorized Version), that it is as good as certain that they are the same names grouped together somewhat differently, and in some cases more or less corrupted in the process of handing down. This idea is very much strengthened by the fact that the compiler of this family tree knows nothing of Adam's sons Cain and Abel, and speaks of Seth as of Adam's eldest son. Here, then, we have an example of two Israelites treating the same material in different ways. Both of them had got hold of certain names, either from traditions which may have been extremely old, or from foreign legends; but their original meaning seems to have been entirely forgotten, and accordingly one of the writers worked them into a story about the murder of a brother, and the ever-growing corruption of the murderer's race, while the other set them in the list of Noah's ancestors.

As we read the statements made with such an appearance of accuracy about the age of each of the forefathers, when his son was born, and when he died himself, we cannot help feeling as if the story were a very faithful historical record. However unwilling we may be to allow the possibility of a man's living to nearly a thousand years of age, this accuracy of statement makes us ask, "May it not be true after all? If not, how did the writer get hold of all these numbers?" For a long time no answer could be given to this question; nor is it fully answered even now; but so much is certain, that many of these numbers were not taken from any old tradition at all, but were invented by the writer himself, and are parts of a chronological system. This fact becomes clear when we compare the family tree we have just been considering with the other sections of the book of which it is a part.

For this story is only a piece of a larger work, generally called "The Book of Origins," which was written soon after the end of the Babylonian captivity, by a priest. Both the names and the events which he brings into his narrative are taken from several different sources, but the grouping and the coloring are his own. It is clear from every part of his work that he thought the course of history could be mapped out according to a regular system of chronology, such as is often found among the Egyptians and Babylonians. He believed that the world would last four thousand years, and that the Israelites came out of Egypt when exactly two-thirds of this period had elapsed; that is to say, two thousand six hundred and sixty-six years after the creation. He makes the Israelites dwell in Egypt just twice as long as their fathers wandered about in Canaan, that is, four hundred and thirty years. More calculations of this kind are to be found in the work; and when once we have discovered the writer's passion for reducing everything to a calculation, and bringing it under a system of numbers, of course we can no longer accept his statements as true.

But though most of the figures which occur in this family tree are parts of the writer's chronological system, there is one which is probably taken from ancient tradition, and that is the age of Enoch. We shall return to this presently.

Now, from this list of the forefathers and their ages it has been calculated how many years after the creation Noah was born; and, as his family tree is afterwards continued[1] in the same style, it has been thought possible to calculate the age of the world, or at least of the human race. In certain old books the dates of events from the creation of the world are given, and we can see in our almanacs that according to the Jewish reckoning this year, 1873, is the year 5633 from the creation. In the margin of many large Bibles, however, as well as in many books of dates, we find it stated that the creation was four thousand years before the birth of Christ (four thousand and four years from the commencement of our era), which would make the year 1873 of our era the year 5877 after the creation. This difference is caused by the obscurity of the data and the contradictions between the various accounts to be found in the Bible. But the difference between these two calculations sinks into insignificance when we consider how far they are both wide of the truth. The Bible cannot really teach us the age of the world or of mankind;

[1] Genesis xi. 10–26.

and people who are determined to make it do so only get laughed at by those who understand the subject, for being so prejudiced as to rely upon such erroneous statements. For geology and astronomy teach us that the universe must at any rate be hundreds of millions of years old, and that even our earth counts its centuries by the thousand already; and though the historical researches which have brought to light the remains of the lake dwellings, the tombs of the age of stone, and the inscriptions of the Egyptian monuments, give us no certain information as to the antiquity of the human race, yet they make us smile at the figure 6000; for before this date a flourishing kingdom certainly existed in Egypt. Even the statue of the Egyptian king Chephren, that was to be seen at the last international exhibition at Paris, was hewn about forty centuries before the beginning of our era.

While leaving it to the students of geology and history to fix the antiquity of the human race to the best of their power, we must answer another question before we leave this story from "the book of religion," — the question, namely, why the author ascribed such long lives to the forefathers, and what he intended to show by it.

But first one word about Enoch. The account of him is perplexingly short: "He walked with God, and he was not [that is, he suddenly disappeared]; for God took him away." Nothing has ever been made of this except that he did not die, but was removed to heaven as a reward for his piety.[1] Perhaps this is really what the writer meant, but the curious brevity of his account, and the strange expression, "God took him away," which we should certainly have expected to find explained or worked out to some extent, make it probable that he took his story from some old tradition. Indeed, we can still make out with great likelihood what this tradition meant; for Enoch, whose age is lower than that of any of the other forefathers, is just as many years old as there are days in a solar year, that is, three hundred and sixty-five; and the name Enoch may be translated "Renewal." We can hardly help thinking, therefore, that the story is a short version of some ancient myth, and that Enoch is a personification of "the year, that after three hundred and sixty-five days, is not."

The shortness of the account of Enoch gave the imagination abundant occasion to work out the story in the Bible

[1] Hebrews xi. 5.

more fully; and the Jews of the last centuries before Jesus certainly did not let the opportunity slip. They represented Enoch as a preacher of righteousness and a proclaimer of God's judgments; and this gave one of them occasion to write a book in the name of Enoch that became very famous, and is even quoted in the New Testament[1] as sacred (canonical) scripture. It has lately been rediscovered in an Ethiopic translation.

We will now return to the statements made as to the great age reached by the forefathers. Properly to understand what the compiler of the family tree meant by them, we must compare this story with others by the same writer. When we do so, we see that he believed the life of man to have grown shorter step by step. For after Noah such high numbers as appear in the time before him are no longer mentioned, although in another family tree, similar to the one we are now speaking of, ages between two and six hundred years still occur;[2] whereas, in the time after Abraham, usually called the patriarchal age, no one lives to two hundred, though many still live to more than a hundred; but after Moses such high ages are no longer met with. Mankind — such is the lesson this Israelite wishes to teach us — have been growing gradually shorter lived. The idea that this was the consequence of sin is, indeed, supported by another writer, who makes Yahweh decide even before the flood that his life-giving spirit shall not exercise its power in man for ever, and that his life shall not exceed one hundred and twenty years;[3] but the writer of the "Book of Origins" does not teach this doctrine. To have a long life, to drop into the grave "full of days," as they called it, was one of the most glorious gifts of God which an Israelite could imagine. When he painted a joyous future for his people, one of the features of the picture was that no sucking child should die nor any one who had not reached the full measure of his years; that if any one died at a hundred he would be said to have perished in his youth; nay, that even a sinner, who was snatched away for his wickedness, would not die before his hundredth year.[4] So thought the writer of this family register. Like the poet of the story of paradise, he imagined that there had been a happier time in the past; and the principal feature of these golden days, he thought, was a long life. The same idea is found among many ancient

[1] Jude vv. 14, 15.
[2] Genesis xi. 10–32.
[3] Genesis vi. 3, after an amended version.
[4] Isaiah lxv. 20.

peoples. Indeed, nothing is more natural, for it is a melancholy thought to all of us that we must die. In general we trouble ourselves very little about it, but from time to time we are reminded of the fact that we must die, in such a way that we cannot help thinking about it, and then the thought invariably gives rise to the most painful feelings. Though careless flippancy may try to put it off, and set aside all thoughts of the future with a laugh, yet whenever the certainty that we must sometime die does come before our eyes, it moves us deeply, and every one who feels and thinks requires some comfort against the mournful thought that he is mortal.

We are made to live. But it does not follow that the wish to spend hundreds of years upon the earth would be a wise one. Such a lengthened life would be full of sadness even if it were not impossible. We must acquiesce in our lot, therefore, and the more quietly and contentedly we do so, the better it will be for us. But, after all, we are created to live, and we may make our life long, even upon this earth, if we will.

It is true that we sometimes say, with a sigh, that life passes by like a dream; but it is a bad sign to make such complaints as this, for if a man sleeps away through a do-nothing life, it seems short when he looks back upon it; but if we work hard and think hard, then our life becomes full and rich, nay it even seems long as we look back upon it, because so much has happened in it. Whole years of a dawdling or selfish or licentious life are worth less than a single day lived by an earnest, thoughtful, God-fearing man. So thought and felt a poet of Israel when he sang:[1]

> A day in thy courts is better than a thousand.
> I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than dwell
> in the tents of wickedness;
> For a sun and shield is God;
> Grace and glory are given by Yahweh;
> No good will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
> O Yahweh of hosts! blessed is the man who trusteth in Thee!

What this psalmist said of abiding in the temple we repeat after him of walking with God. Blessed is the man who looks up to God, and abides with him. Let us not wish for a long life so much as for a holy and an active one; for this alone is truly *life*, and thus alone does the hope of life eternal spring up within our hearts.

[1] Psalm lxxxiv. 10–12.

Chapter VI.

THE FLOOD.

Gen. VI.–VIII.

AMONGST almost all ancient peoples we find a tradition that, when the world was buried in sins, a great flood destroyed it, with the exception of some few persons who escaped. The Chaldees, for example, told of a certain Xisuthros, the tenth and last ruler before the flood, to whom the highest god foretold that the beginning of the judgment would fall upon the fifteenth day of the month Daesius. On this he buried the written archives of ancient times in Sepharvaim,[1] the city of the sun, embarked with his relations and friends in a great ship, into which he took every kind of quadruped and of flying and creeping thing, together with the necessary food, and then sailed to Armenia. By letting birds fly out of the vessel he frequently tested the state of the earth. When these birds came back the second time they had mud on their feet, and when they flew out the third time they did not come back at all. Upon this Xisuthros, with his wife and the steersman, left the ship; but, in reward for their piety, they were suddenly carried up to the dwelling of the gods, and Xisuthros was only able to cry out from the air, to those who were left behind, that they must go back to Babylon and restore the books, which he had buried, to mankind; which accordingly they did.

A similar story is found among the Phrygians, who even mention Enoch's preaching and ascension in connection with it. The Syrians, Phœnicians, Persians, and Hindoos, all had stories of a flood, which agreed in some points with those of the Israelites, and differed from them in others. In the same way we find them among the European nations, too. In the Greek story it is Deucalion and Pyrrha who are spared on account of their piety; with the Celts and Germans the persons saved have other names; but everywhere we find some story of the sort. This fact, with others like it, points with the greatest likelihood, to a common fatherland, the cradle of these nations, from which they all came, taking these traditions with them. Perhaps this country was

[1] See map 1.

Armenia, in which the Israelite stories, as well as others, place us.

In the legends of which we have so far spoken, we have discovered the work of two writers, the first of whom speaks of the Supreme Being under the name of "God," and gave us the first account of the creation, and the family register of Adam down to Noah, while the second uses the name Yahweh, and gave us the story of paradise and the account of the Cainites. It is natural to ask, therefore, from which of these writers the story of the flood is derived; but it is not easy to answer the question. In the three chapters which contain this story there are two documents mixed up together, and though we can sometimes distinguish the style and the peculiar ideas of the former writers, it is at other times very hard to say whether we have either of the two before us, rather than some third writer. For the most part they quite agree with each other, and consequently the story is not free from repetitions, but here and there the accounts are unmistakably contradictory.

It is not necessary for our purpose to go into the question of the composition of the story any further. As far as it forms a single whole, I will retell it straight through, and then point out a few contradictions.

Here, then, is the story of the deluge or flood: —

When men began to multiply upon the earth, their wickedness grew greater and greater. Among the other inhabitants of earth, there rose up giants, who had earthly mothers, but whose fathers were divine beings called sons of God; and these giants in their turn became the fathers of others. These were the heroes of the olden time. All the earth became godless. Violence was universal. All flesh — that is, man and beast — grew more and more rude and wild.

Then Yahweh, seeing that there was nothing but evil in mankind, repented that he had made them, and determined to destroy them, and all the beasts as well. Noah alone found favor with him, and he therefore commanded him to make an ark or chest. This vessel, built of resinous timber, and covered outside and in with pitch, was to be three hundred cubits long, fifty broad, and thirty high. It was to be divided into three stories, and subdivided into chambers, with an opening to let in light and air, and a door. God told him that he must prepare this vessel, because all living things upon the earth were to be destroyed; while he himself, his wife, his three sons — Shem, Ham, and Japhet — and their

wives, were to seek refuge in this ark. Moreover, he was to take with him a pair of every kind of animal, a male and a female, besides the necessary food for man and beast.

This warning and the directions that accompanied it were given to Noah seven days before the flood began. He obeyed and on the seventh day the flood of waters came. It was the six hundredth year of Noah's life, the seventeenth day of the second month. On this day all the flood-gates of the great ocean burst open, and it poured its streams over the earth. At the same time the windows of heaven were opened, and the waters collected above the firmament fell down upon the earth in torrents. Forty days long this deluge of rain went on. Everything that had life perished in the water. In vain did man and beast flee to the mountains. The water rose fifteen cubits above the topmost peak. But Noah and his family were safe in the ark, and with them all the creatures, quadrupeds, reptiles, and birds, which had come in to them.

A hundred and fifty days had the water covered everything, when God bethought himself once more of Noah and his family. So he caused a strong wind to rise, and the waters began to abate. The fountains of the ocean and the windows of heaven were already closed. Little by little the water flowed away again, and upon the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark settled upon one of the mountain peaks in the land of Ararat, and the peaks themselves became visible once more upon the eleventh day of the tenth month. Forty days later Noah opened the window and let out a raven, that went on flying backwards and forwards until the earth became dry again. After the raven he sent out a dove, to see whether the water had gone away yet; but she could not find a resting place anywhere, for everything was covered with water still, so she came back to the ark and was taken in again. After waiting seven days, Noah let out a dove the second time, and towards evening she came back again with a leaf fresh broken from an olive-tree in her beak. So Noah knew that the earth was delivered from the excess of water. After waiting another seven days, he once more let out a dove, but she did not return.

So in the six hundred and first year of his life, on the first day of the first month, when the earth was delivered from the water, Noah took off the covering that was over the ark. On the twenty-seventh day of the second month, the earth was quite dry. Then God said to Noah, "Come out of the ark, with your wife and children and all the animals. Let them

spread themselves over the earth and people it once more." Noah obeyed, and when he had come out of the ark, he made a thank-offering to Yahweh.

Now when Yahweh smelt the odor of the sacrifice, he thought: "I will never curse the earth again for the sake of men; for they are evil from their youth up. So, why should I ever destroy all living things again? No. Henceforth shall seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, follow each other undisturbed."

Many a brow has been bent over this story before now! Indeed, if we are to suppose that all the stories in the Bible are historically true, we shall find difficulties enough in the representation of this ark, in which all the animals — quadrupeds, reptiles, and birds — were kept alive for about a year; and it is not easy even to imagine a flood rising to fifteen cubits above the highest mountain-tops, even if we suppose (what the writer certainly did not intend) that it only covered that part of the earth which was inhabited at the time. Some people have given themselves an incredible amount of trouble about this story. One scholar has calculated how much space there was in the ark, and how many kinds of animals could be accommodated in it, allowing for a pair of each and the necessary food. An inhabitant of Hoorn, in Holland, actually built a ship in the year 1609, on the model of the ark, and found that a vessel so constructed was capable of bearing a specially heavy freight! No doubt it is a very creditable thing to spend labor and money in convincing ourselves of the truth of our opinions; but those who have tried to support the historical reliability of the story of the flood by these means have lost their labor; for they leave the principal difficulties where they were. How can we believe that Noah collected all these animals and the food they would require, in seven days? We must suppose that he did so, however, if we follow the account given us, for he was only warned one week beforehand.[1] Besides this, there is at least one contradiction to explain between the two accounts that are worked together. For one writer says that Noah was to take *one* pair of every kind of animal into the ark;[2] while the other writer makes a distinction between the clean and unclean animals, and makes Yahweh tell Noah to take one pair only of the unclean animals, but seven pair of the clean ones with him.[3] And so it is only this writer who can say that, after

[1] Gen. vii. 4, 10. [2] Gen. vi. 20. [3] Gen. vii. 2, 3, 8, 9.

his deliverance, Noah made a sacrifice of all kinds of clean animals to Yahweh;[1] if the other writer had done so he would have made him destroy his whole stock of cattle and all the edible birds.

We will not trouble ourselves to speak of all the difficulties of the story, taken as a true account of a fact. We will not even answer the question, what historical foundation there is for the story. There may have been many great floods, the memory of which was preserved, though we can hardly believe any of them ever rose above the peaks of Ararat. It is not unlikely that the foundation of all these legends of the flood is to be found in some myth, in which nature has become degenerate, as it were, in the winter, and is buried and for a time destroyed by the overflowing of a river in the spring, but wakes up afterwards to fresh life. At least it is remarkable that from the beginning of the flood to the day on which Noah leaves the ark, just about a year passes by; and also that most of the legends of the flood, amongst others that of the Israelites, take us to countries in which the rivers rise above their banks every year.

But whatever the source may have been from which our writers drew the old story, they clothed it according to their own ideas, and we can therefore learn from it what they thought of God and of his relation to mankind. From this point of view the story inspires us with no great respect. On the contrary, its leading ideas are perverted and superstitious. Nay, the writer who uses the name Yahweh, to whom we owe the stories about paradise and the Cainites, actually repels us. For how does he make his god think and act with regard to man? Yahweh repents that he has made mankind. He is deeply grieved because there is nothing but evil in man.[2] Noah alone is an exception to the rule. So all created things, to which life has been given, are destroyed, except the men and beasts secured within the ark. But after the flood, when Yahweh smelt Noah's sacrifice, half pleased by the offering, half vexed to think of the futility of what he had just done, he said: "I will never destroy the earth again for the guilt of men, for they are bad from their very birth; so what is the use of my destroying them?"[3] Of whom is this Israelite writer speaking? As for his representing his Yahweh in the form of a man, we knew that he did that before, and all through the writings of the Israelites we come upon this anthropomorphism (representations of the Supreme Being under human

[1] Gen. viii. 20. [2] Gen. vi. 1–8. [3] Gen. viii. 21, 22.

forms) again and again. Even this we do not always find edifying; but, mindful of the fact that man can never form a true conception of deity or find adequate expressions in which to speak of it, we need not be distressed when any one speaks of God's hand or foot, God's heart or eye, God's anger or love. We ourselves sometimes use expressions of this kind without the smallest hesitation; and therefore, even when we read that God smelt a sacrifice or that he repented of having made mankind, the necessity of using forms of speech concerning God, which are borrowed from the life of man, may be admitted as an excuse; although we know that "God is not a man, that he should repent."[1] But in this story the whole conduct of Yahweh is unworthy. We should be offended by such behavior in a man. To destroy his work because it had not turned out particularly well, and then to say dryly that he really need not have done so, for after all the result will never be any better, — such conduct would not speak very well for the character of a man, and yet it is ascribed by this writer to his god! Surely, a writer who can make such representations can have no very exalted conception of his god.

The other narrator, the writer of the "Book of Origins," gives us no such unworthy representations of God's work either in this story or in the first account of the creation, or in Adam's family register. In those parts of the story which come from his hand, however, we find what appears to us a very extraordinary idea, though there was nothing strange about it to the Israelites. The readers of the story, as given above, will probably have noticed with surprise that the moral corruption spoken of was not confined to mankind, but was to be seen in the animal world as well. This is the real meaning of the expression that "all flesh," that is man and beast, shall be destroyed, "because they have filled the earth with violence, and have corrupted their ways before God."[2] What, then! Does our writer believe that the animals too have a share in the knowledge of good and evil? Can *they* be spoken of as guilty? We shall see by a subsequent story that this idea was not altogether foreign to the Israelites, and we need not say any more about it at present, therefore; but it is pretty clear what the writer meant by the change which had come over the animal world, calling for punishment, together with the sins of man, by the great deluge. In his account of the creation, he told us that God had given all the beasts of the field, all the birds,

[1] Num. xxiii. 19. [2] Gen. vi. 11–13.

all the creeping things, everything in fact that has life, the grass for food.[1] When he complains, therefore, of the violence of which all flesh had become guilty, what else can he mean but that some animals had become carnivorous (flesh-eating)? This lamentation agrees most remarkably with the expectation of the prophet Isaiah, that, when the golden age of the future dawned, the beasts of prey would forget their savage nature, the wolf would dwell with the lamb, and the lion would eat hay like the ox.[2]

But, however great the difference may be in the special views of the two authors, whose work is combined in the story of the flood, the leading thought of both is the same; namely, that God punished the sins of the world by a flood. We must dwell upon this matter at some length, for in every part of the Old Testament we shall find the idea that God punishes men for their unrighteousness by disasters which are not the natural consequences of their sins, but are only attached to them as penalties by God's good pleasure. Once for all, we must stamp this idea as superstitious; and how injurious to true piety and pure morality this superstition is, we shall have many opportunities of remarking in the course of our work.

The belief that every disaster was a declaration of God's displeasure might very easily arise in ancient times, when the mutual connection and the causes of the phenomena of nature were unknown, and the immediate activity of some deity and the revelation of his will was seen in everything. Then, as we saw in the story of Cain, it might be imagined that the earth refused to yield her fruit to one who had murdered his brother, so that he would plough and sow in vain. Then, as the same story teaches us, the phenomena of nature might be regarded as warnings and as omens. Then, a revelation of the wrath of the deity might be found in every failure of the crops through drought or any other misfortune, in every storm that stranded vessels and overturned dwellings, in every fever, in every disaster, and in everything which was not understood but had a threatening aspect, such as an eclipse of the sun or the appearance of a comet; while pleasant sunshine, balmy showers, recovery from sickness, in a word all that was favorable and pleasant to man, was taken as a proof that the Supreme Being was well disposed towards him. No one can seriously hold this opinion now. We have learned the causes of many of the phenomena of nature, and therefore see no signs of God's pleasure or displeasure in them; for now that

[1] Gen. i. 29. [2] Isaiah xi. 6-9.

we can imitate the lightning on a small scale by the electrical machine, and can guide it by conductors where we will; now that we can draw up storm-charts and can predict successfully the direction and the strength of the wind a day beforehand, by the aeroclinoscope; now that we have discovered means of preventing or curing so many diseases, and arm ourselves against small-pox by vaccination, or extinguish pain by chloroform; now that the science of agriculture has placed so many means in our hands of making the earth more fruitful; now that the invention of the locomotive and the steamboat is making famine ever more rare, by making it easier to bring the necessaries of life from one place to another: in such times as these, it will not do to look for a sign of God's displeasure in the misfortunes of which we know the causes, and which we have therefore found the means of resisting; and it is mere folly for a man to consider himself particularly virtuous and a darling child of providence, because he enjoys exceptional prosperity.

The belief that God's anger and his pleasure are revealed in events which are propitious or the reverse to us, was the result of the primitive nature-worship, in which the deity was identified with visible objects or with powers of nature, a form of worship from which the Israelite began to shake himself free when he uttered his belief that God made heaven and earth, but from the influence of which he was never able altogether to withdraw himself, any more than many of those who live in our own times can do so now.

The leading idea of the story of the flood is therefore wrong, and so we cannot give any high position to the legend itself.

And yet the story is a very striking picture of what God, the almighty ruler, is ever doing. Whole worlds are brought to destruction by him. Egypt was once the seat of a mighty kingdom, in which art and science flourished. What is there left of it? Pyramids and obelisks, sphinxes and ruins, call up the past before the mind of the inquirer; but where is Egyptian society? Gone! Babylon and Nineveh were once the centres of the whole world, where men thought and worked and strove. And now their remains, which the sands of the desert have kept buried ages long, are being laboriously dug out, and are telling us of a past that has gone by so utterly, that it was long supposed to have vanished and left no trace behind. Where is the ancient world of Rome and Greece? The relics it has left behind are many, but it has passed away

itself. And so we may see even now that the very centres of human life are sometimes swept away as by a flood.

Why is this? Why have the ancient worlds, with all their culture and development, passed away? Is it because they had fallen out of the march of progress and had sunk into corruption? Is it because they had forgotten God? We cannot boldly answer these questions in the affirmative, or ascribe the destruction of these worlds to their sins alone; for so many things work together to bring about the fall of a nation, and among these causes there are many which have no connection with its moral condition. But, whatever it may be to which we ascribe these great events, it seems as if God were always doing his work over again. He builds up and then casts down again, to raise a new world upon the ruins of the old.

And this is certain, that where men have forgotten God; where culture and the sense of artistic beauty are not accompanied by moral elevation, but only serve to give empire to refined forms of sin; there sooner or later the varnish is rubbed off, and the mouldering structure is revealed; there thrones are overturned and peoples humbled; there the old order of things is swept away to make room for something better; and so a stern sentence, a judgment of God, goes out over the world.

Most men think but little of all this. They trifle away the hours, "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage,"[1] till the day of reckoning comes. They say, in deeds if not in words, "It will last our time! We shall be gone when the deluge comes!" Until the deluge really comes.

There are but few who believe in the judgment of God, and while the world around them takes no notice of it and disguises every danger, they see it drawing nigh. They are, like Enoch and Noah, the preachers of righteousness,[2] and when they are disbelieved, they build, for themselves and for those of kindred spirit, the ark of the inner life with God, and there they are delivered from the judgment.

[1] Luke xvii. 27. [2] 2 Peter ii. 5. Jude vv. 14, 15.

Chapter VII.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH NOAH.

Gen. IX. 1–17. P

THE subject of this chapter is connected immediately with that of the last, for it is itself a part of the story of the flood. We have seen how the writer who uses Yahweh as the name of his god, and distinguishes between clean and unclean animals, makes Noah offer a sacrifice to Yahweh as soon as he has come out of the ark, upon which Yahweh determines never again to destroy the world. Now the other narrator, the author of the "Book of Origins," knows nothing of this sacrifice, but makes God bless Noah and his family, as soon as they have left the ark, on which occasion he gives them certain commandments to observe, together with a promise of his favor accompanied by a certain sign. Both the commandments and the sign are of sufficient importance to deserve special attention.

When God blessed Noah and his sons, he said, as he had done when first he created man,[1] "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. All beasts of the field and all birds shall be in fear and dread of you, and all creeping things and all fishes shall be in your power." All this had been so from the beginning, for even then man had received dominion over the animal world; but violence having become so common both amongst men and beasts, this lordship was no longer to be peacefully acknowledged, but was to rest upon the fear of man entertained by the animals; and since some of them had become carnivorous, they were henceforth to stand in a different relation to man as well as to each other; for whereas grains and herbs merely had been given him as food at the creation, he was henceforth to be allowed to eat flesh as well. God gave him permission to do so in these words: "Everything in which there is a living soul shall be food for you. I have given it you as I have given you the grains." One limitation only man must be content to accept. He must not eat flesh in which there was still life, that is blood.

Two points in this story call for our attention. In the first place the writer does not make the smallest distinction between

[1] Genesis i. 28.

clean and unclean animals; but we cannot be sure from this that the distinction was not known to him. All we can say is that he did not suppose the custom of abstaining from the flesh of certain animals to be so ancient as the other writer thought it, when he made Noah save seven pair of the clean animals, and only one pair of the unclean.

The distinction between clean and unclean animals appears to us a very curious one, in many respects. No doubt we too are accustomed to avoid using the flesh of some animals for food, though it is very suitable for the purpose — horse-flesh for instance. But we should never think of making it a religious duty to refrain from it. To do so, however, was quite in the spirit of antiquity, for then all kinds of things, that seem to us to have no sort of connection with religion, were commanded in God's name. The origin of the distinction between clean and unclean animals in Israel is not known with certainty. The rule[1] given out by the priests was that no quadrupeds might be eaten except those that had a properly cloven hoof and chewed the cud; and only those fishes that had fins and scales, which would exclude the lamprey and the eel, for example, as well as oysters and all shell-fish; while certain kinds of birds mentioned by name and all creeping things (among which the weasel, the mouse, the tortoise, the hedgehog, the crocodile, the toad, and the mole, were reckoned) were unclean. There are certain differences in the law in the two versions in which it appears. For instance, the locust is said in Leviticus to be clean, but in Deuteronomy unclean. The law of Deuteronomy is the earliest, and dates, as has been said,[2] from the last century before the captivity. All attempts to find definite reasons for which the Israelites pronounced some kinds of animals clean and others unclean, have been unsuccessful. It seems that some of the unclean animals inspired them with a feeling of disgust, that they considered others, rightly or wrongly, to be unwholesome, and that others again accidentally gave them the impression of being unclean. Thus habit gradually established the distinction, until the priests confirmed it by attaching a religious meaning to it, and commanding its observance as a religious duty. Though some of the Israelites believed this law to be as ancient as the human race, our writer knew quite well that it was of comparatively recent date, and so he made God give Noah all kinds of animals for food.

[1] Deuteronomy, xiv. 4–20. Leviticus xi. 1–31. [2] See p. 26.

We must next consider the prohibition: "You must not eat the flesh with its soul, that is its blood." This commandment is often repeated in the religious laws of the Israelites,[1] and on one occasion the blood of all four-footed beasts and all birds[2] is expressly mentioned, while that of fishes is not spoken of. During the six centuries that passed between the time when this prohibition was made a part of the Law, and the founding of Christianity, it had taken such deep root in the Jewish mind, that the question as to eating blood, and meat with the blood in it, was one of the most important differences which stood in the way of the union of Christians who had been Jews with those who had been heathens.[3] It is well known, too, how strictly the Jews of our own time still observe this rule, as well as the other laws about what may be eaten. In order that the blood may flow off properly when animals are killed for food, the slaughtering is not left to any one who happens to consider himself fit for the occupation, but the Jew butchers have to call in the "master" to kill their meat. This master must have passed an examination in his art, and is called to a community as butcher (shochet). The knife that he uses for his work must always be examined, and passed by a rabbi. Not only must it be sharp and two-edged, but there must not be the smallest notch on it, both to avoid giving the animal any unnecessary pain, and to allow the blood to flow off without the smallest obstacle. Want of skill in sharpening the knife makes a Jewish master worthless, and a few slips in this particular soon cause him to be deposed.

We do not find the same horror of the use of blood among all ancient peoples, for in making treaties it was by no means uncommon to drink the blood of the sacrifice, and in our own times even, travellers tell us of uncivilized nations, such as the Abyssinians, who, when hungry, sometimes cut pieces of flesh out of living cattle and eat them, all hot and bleeding, as a dainty. Even the ancient Israelites did not always refrain from this practice, but they allowed themselves to be dissuaded from it, and did not really approve of it.[4] Now in our story an explanation is given of the commandment not to eat blood, which helps us to understand the ancient modes of thought; for not only men, but animals also, were thought of as having souls. Killing an animal therefore is called

[1] Deuteronomy xii. 16, 23, 24; xv. 23. Leviticus iii. 17; vii. 26, 27; xvii. 10-14; xix. 26.
[2] Leviticus vii. 26.
[3] Acts xv. 20, 29.
[4] 1 Samuel xiv. 32 ff. After an amended version.

"smiting the soul of an animal;"[1] and since they believed that every animal had a soul, they felt a kind of reverence towards it. This belief explains many of the customs of uncivilized peoples of ancient and modern times, for instance their dislike of pronouncing the name of any beast of which they are afraid; the practice, when they have hunted and killed an animal, of asking it to forgive them, and even pacifying it with sacrifices; and the worship addressed to all sorts of animals. It was very natural for people to think that the soul was connected with the blood; for when the blood of man or beast was shed the breathing ceased, and the life departed, and the obvious inference was that the blood was the seat of the principle of life, that is the soul. It was this idea, too, that led the Israelites to refrain from using the blood of animals for food, until at last the Law commanded this abstinence in the name of God. After that it passed into a commandment that every one observed mechanically, without troubling himself about the grounds on which it rested.

These remarks have interrupted us in the middle of our account of what God said to Noah and his family; but that which follows stands in close connection with the subjects of which we have just spoken. As far as it concerns the commandments, the whole speech runs as follows: "Be fruitful and fill the earth. Fear of you shall come upon all the animals. You have power over them. You are even free henceforth to eat the flesh of all that has life, as well as grains and herbs, as long as you do not eat the blood, for the soul of the animal is in it. On the other hand, to protect your soul (or your life) I shall demand your blood from any one who sheds it. Whether it be a beast or one of your fellow-men, he must pay back the soul of a man which he has taken away. Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man after his likeness. And as for you, increase and fill the earth."

In opposition, then, to the blood of animals, which might be shed without fear, the blood of man was holy and inviolable. Murder, therefore, was punished in the Israelite laws by death,[2] not because of the extreme wickedness of the man who robbed his neighbor of life, but simply because compensation must be paid for the soul that had been destroyed. And this is why it made no difference whether a man had

[1] Leviticus xxiv. 18. After an amended version.
[2] Exodus xxi. 12. Leviticus xxiv. 17, 21, 22.

killed another on purpose or by accident. In either case he had forfeited his life. Even an animal, that had killed a man, must be stoned.[1]

This last practice appears very absurd to us; but it was not confined to a high antiquity. In Christian countries, and even in Western Europe, many an animal has been brought to justice at the hands of the hangman, for killing a man. As late as in 1486, the hangman of Ypres, in Flanders, was ordered to execute a boar upon the scaffold, because it had killed a child.

So, if a man had killed any one, on purpose or by accident, he had forfeited his own life. The blood that had been shed cried out for a recompense, and it was the duty of the nearest relative to demand the debt by slaying the murderer. For this reason he was called the *blood-redeemer*, for the Hebrew word must be so translated, not *blood-avenger*. The redeemer was not only allowed but obliged to destroy the murderer. He was not allowed to follow the practice of other nations, sometimes adopted doubtless in Israel too, and accept a ransom in money. To do so was a sin; for when blood was shed it defiled the land, and the stain could only be washed out by the blood of the murderer;[2] for man was made after the image of God, and was therefore inviolable. The god of Israel was a stern god, and no one who marred his likeness could escape his punishment.

The difference, however, between a man who had killed his neighbor intentionally and one who had accidentally caused the death of some one — possibly his dearest friend — was so obvious that a natural feeling of fairness required some softening of this stern law. There were certain places of refuge, therefore. In the earliest times this privilege belonged to the temples, and the altar especially protected the murderer. Afterwards, when the number of sanctuaries was limited, there were certain cities of refuge in which any one who had killed a man, without any guilt on his own part, might sojourn. But if any one had committed a murder out of hatred, it was no use his escaping to one of these cities, for he was given up to the blood-redeemer, and was killed by him. His life was protected only if he was guiltless, and in that case he might go back in safety to his own home, on the death of the high-priest.[3]

The expression: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by

[1] Exodus xxi. 28–32. [2] Numbers xxxv. 31–34.
[3] Deuteronomy xix. 1–13. Numbers xxxv. 9–34.

man shall his blood be shed, because he is made after the image of God," is frequently quoted in defence of capital punishment as the legal penalty for murder. Of course, if we are to frame our penal code after the model of that of Israel, this is all fair; but in that case we are bound to execute any animal that has killed a man: for if we recognize a certain commandment as divine, and therefore binding upon us as well as those to whom it was given, we have no right to observe one half of it and throw the other half to the winds. But this is the way in which the words of the Bible are abused. However useful the law that the murderer must be punished by death may have been in ancient times, it must not be accepted and observed as a divine law by us.

The later Rabbis increased the commandments about abstaining from blood and the inviolability of human life to the number of seven. To these they added: obedience to the authorities, and prohibition of blasphemy, idolatry, incest, and theft. They called these the Noachic commandments, and considered that every one, whether Jew or heathen, was bound to observe them, inasmuch as they had been issued before the promulgation of the Mosaic law. For this reason they were imposed upon the so-called "proselytes of the gate," that is, the heathens who had half gone over to Judaism. All this, however, only dates from a period centuries later than the Babylonian captivity.

Such was man's side of the covenant, and God, on his part, promised that he would never send a flood of waters upon the earth again. As a token of this covenant he made the rainbow that, whenever he gathered the clouds together over the earth, it might appear to remind him of his promise, which was to hold good for ever.

It is not surprising that so splendid a phenomenon as the rainbow made a deep impression upon the peoples of antiquity. The cause of its appearance was not in the least degree understood, but it was observed that it was connected in some way with the rain. This gave rise to all sorts of speculations, and the rainbow, consequently, plays a part in the mythologies of many nations. It is often called the bridge by which the gods come down from heaven to earth, or by which the souls of the departed reach the abode of bliss. This idea is not found among the Israelites. In our story the "bow of God," is the sign of the covenant; but that does not mean that it was intended to reassure mankind.

According to the Israelites, the rainbow no more served this purpose than did the sign of which Yahweh spoke to Cain; but just as the latter was meant to warn any one who was about to raise his hand against Cain or the Cainites,[1] so the former was meant to remind God of his promise. What childlike ideas of God people had in ancient times! As if the memory of the deity needed to be refreshed in this way.

In their expectations as to the future, then, the two authors who tell us about the flood are quite agreed. They do not expect that such an all-destroying flood will ever come upon the earth again; but they cherish this belief upon very different grounds: or rather, they ascribe very different motives to their god in giving this promise. According to the one, God's motive is humiliating enough to man: viz., that he is really incorrigible; while the other rises to a higher point of view, and ascribes to God good-will towards all that lives, both man and beast; while the life of man, who is made after his image, is inviolable. In this he approaches to some extent the position of Jesus, who dared to call God, Father, and reverenced in man, in spite of all his shortcomings and all his want of holiness, the child of God.

After the story of the flood comes that of Noah's drunkenness and his cursing Canaan. It is from the same hand as the account of the flood in which the name of Yahweh is used, the distinction between clean and unclean animals made, and the sacrifice of Noah mentioned. We shall speak of it afterwards in another connection.

Chapter VIII.

NIMROD.

Gen. X. 8–12.

IN the mountains of Armenia, there rise, not far from each other, two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. The Euphrates, which rises north of the other, takes a wide sweep to the west, round the mountains of Armenia, while the Tigris flows south-east from the first. Then they both

[1] See pp. 54, 59.

flow through a plain, a considerable height above the level of the sea, some parts of which, especially near the banks of the rivers, are moderately fertile, though the rest of the territory between the two streams is dry and barren. This region was called by the Greeks Mesopotamia, that is, the country between the rivers. This district, together with that to the east of the Tigris, was formerly inhabited by the Assyrians, whose capital, Nineveh, was situated on the left bank of this river. On issuing from this region the two rivers approach pretty close together and then part again; and so, sometimes nearer and sometimes further from each other, flow on in the same direction until they pour themselves into the Persian Gulf. A fruitful plain stretches down from the place where the two streams approach each other most closely. It is called the plain of Shinear, that is, again "of the two rivers," and was inhabited by the Babylonians.[1]

From the eighth century before Christ onwards the Israelites came into very close contact with both Assyrians and Babylonians; and it is not surprising, therefore, that they felt an interest in the earliest history of their countries.

The following account is given us by one of them: —

Nimrod, the Ethiopian, was the first tyrant upon earth. He was a mighty hunter before the face of Yahweh; and that is the origin of the proverbial expression: "a hunter like Nimrod before Yahweh." He ruled at first over Babel, Erech, Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinear. Then he went to Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen, which is situated between Nineveh and Calah, — this is the great city.

What is told us of Nimrod in this passage does not give us a very favorable impression of him, and we cannot be surprised that the later Jewish writers draw a portrait which is anything but flattering of this first tyrant and mighty hunter. One of them (Flavius Josephus[2]) combines the story of the tower of Babel with this notice of Nimrod, and represents him as having tried to carry heaven by storm, and as having been slain by the wrath of God in punishment for his audacity. All this, however, is quite contrary to the intention of the old story, in which nothing is told to the discredit but everything to the honor of Nimrod, and he is represented as one of the benefactors of mankind. There is certainly nothing noble in hunting or shooting defenceless game, either for pleasure or profit, in our day; but to under-

[1] See map 1. [2] On Josephus, see vol. iii., Introduction viii.

stand the story of Nimrod we must imagine a country thinly inhabited and swarming with beasts of prey, with wolves lions, tigers, eagles, and serpents. In such a country a powerful and valiant hunter who risks his life in protecting men and cattle, is beloved by every one. It is but natural too, that such a man, renowned for his strength and skill, honored for his courage, and the benefits he confers, proud of the power his arms have won for him, and accustomed to brave every danger, should be the leader of his tribesmen in war and the umpire of their disputes in times of peace, and so gradually become their acknowledged ruler. And though a power which rests on the sword is not our ideal, yet even this was a blessing in ancient times; for the political institutions of our day were unknown; and unless there were some one to preserve order by force and by the fear which his person inspired, a whole district might easily fall a prey to strife and disorder. Hence establishing a personal rule was a step in the path of progress and increased civilization. All the influential princes of antiquity were tyrants, mighty hunters in time of peace, and warriors when threatened by the enemy; and the sagas of the most different nations attribute the slaughtering of monsters and giants to their gods and demigods. Such were the deeds of the god Thor in the belief of our forefathers; and of Orion and Herakles (Hercules) according to the Greeks. I do not mean to assert that there really were men who bore these names, and that after their death they were worshipped as gods; but by ascribing such exploits to their gods, the ancients showed how much they thought of them, and how highly mighty hunters and tyrants were honored.

Now we understand how Nimrod could be called a mighty hunter "before the face of Yahweh;" for this expression does not mean, as is sometimes said, a hunter who was rebellious against Yahweh, but a hunter upon whom Yahweh looked, that is, whom he appointed to struggle mightily, and to prepare the way for civilization and progress in the countries over which he ruled.

The name of Nimrod has not as yet been discovered upon the ancient monuments of Babylon and Assyria; nor can we even explain its meaning with any certainty. We are, therefore, quite unable to tell whether it was originally the name of a god, a tribe, or a man; but in any case Nimrod is one of those mythical beings in whose fortunes and exploits the history of a country is recorded.

Now let us read the account once more: Cush, that is

Ethiopia, gave Nimrod being. He was the first tyrant on earth. A mighty hunter before Yahweh, he ruled at first over the four cities or districts of the plain of Shinear, and then extended his dominion over the four great Assyrian cities which make up all together what is called "the great city," for this seems to be the true meaning of the last words of the passage. The meaning of the story is this: The first settled state ever founded upon earth must be looked for in Babylonia. This kingdom was of Ethiopian origin, inasmuch as it was founded by a tribe that had migrated from Ethiopia. Babel and the three other places mentioned were its principal cities. In the course of time the Babylonian civilization spread over Assyria, and thither the seat of empire over Asia was afterwards removed.

This story agrees with what the Greek traditions tell us of migrations of the Ethiopians to the plain of Shinear, in primeval times, and their expeditions from this country northward; and the spread of the Babylonian civilization over Assyria is painted in rich and varied colors in all the legends of Semiramis which we find in the writings of the Greeks. This warlike and yet voluptuous princess was said to have been married first to Oannes and then to Ninus. After this second marriage, and especially after the death of her husband, she conquered half the world, but was defeated at last by the Indians, and then carried up to heaven, or, according to others, murdered by her son. To her the legends ascribed not only all the conquests of the Assyrians, but also all the magnificent buildings both in Assyria and in Babylonia. Now the word Semiramis means "the high-exalted name," and is the appellation of a goddess. Oannes is the name of the god who civilized the Babylonians, according to old Chaldean myths; Ninus is a personification of the Assyrian people. The meaning of the legend, therefore, is as follows: After the rude and warlike people of Assyria had come into contact with the culture and religion of Babylon, and the seat of empire had passed from Babel to Nineveh, the Assyrians came forward as the conquerors of the world, and not only made conquests on every side, but also left traces of their influence in countless monuments.

The researches of later times have confirmed what these legends teach us. An incredible amount of labor has been expended upon the examination of a number of Babylonian and Assyrian ruins; and many scholars, of whom Botta, Place,

Layard, Rawlinson, Oppert, and recently Schrader, are the best known, have devoted their powers to the difficult task of deciphering the inscriptions which have been found in great numbers. Much obscurity still hangs round this ancient history, but some facts at least have been disclosed; and so far they agree with what the legends tell us.

The scholars who are engaged in these studies think it probable that the population of Babylonia and Assyria was made up of two different races, and that the original inhabitants were subjugated by an Ethiopian immigration, whose language gained the supremacy over theirs. Perhaps the Chaldees, a tribe of priests in Babylonia, after whom the whole nation is commonly called that of the Chaldees, were the remains of these ancient inhabitants. About the year 2300, the kingdom of Nimrod, as we might call the old Chaldean monarchy, according to the story in Genesis x., was already established in the plain of Shinear. The chief god was the same Oannes with whom we met in the legends of Semiramis. Amongst the other gods, of whom we shall have more to say hereafter, were Bel, Mylitta, and Dagan, and their worship was often of a very immoral character. In the eighteenth century before Christ, the old Chaldean monarchy had fallen into decay, and in the seventeenth it was conquered by the Egyptians, under whose supremacy Assyria gradually arose, until its monarchs, during the same period as that in which the Israelites came out of Egypt, made themselves masters of Babel, and ruled the whole "land of the two rivers" from Nineveh. Thus "Nimrod went to Assyria." We shall come upon this Assyrian empire again in the course of the history of the Israelites, and shall see how great an influence it exercised upon them, both by its religion and its arms.

Once more let the figure of Nimrod rise before us, as it is here described. He is not an attractive figure — this mighty hunter, this despotic ruler! Conscious strength and courage are seated on his brow. He rescues the flock from the claws of the dreaded lion. He enables the industrious to cultivate their land, and equip their fishing boats in peace. He promulgates laws and preserves order. Woe to the man who seizes his neighbor's wife or who slays his brother! The ruler's grasp is upon him, he has hurled him to the ground, he has struck him dead! Woe to the man who attacks him himself! He leaves no injury unavenged. It needs but little provocation to make him slay the offender. So a heavy price is paid for

safety, since freedom is thrown into fetters. The rule of the wild beasts is changed for that of a man, and a man may be more terrible than a wild beast, in his rage.

But the maintenance of order and justice, even after a rude fashion, paves the way to development in every direction. It is the first step towards the formation of a healthy society; and the second step is soon made by the people, and this is followed by others yet. Let no one despise the day of small things! Nimrod a tyrant and a mighty hunter! Yes, but before Yahweh's face. God, who created all that is good, makes use even of tyrants to realize his ends. They may be the forerunners of better and gentler times.

Chapter IX.

THE TOWER OF BABEL.

Gen. XI. 1–9.

ON the western bank of the Euphrates, a little to the south of Babylon proper, on the spot marked Borsippa on our map, the traveller may still see a mighty ruin which rears itself above the naked plain around, and serves as a land-mark to the wandering shepherds. It is the basis, two hundred and eighty feet in height, of a colossal building, a small part of the first story of which still crowns it. This ruin is known amongst the people of the country as "the mountain of Nimrod." It is all that remains of the Temple of Bel, formerly one of the most enormous buildings of the magnificent Babylon. Ancient writers vie with each other in describing its glories. It was a four-cornered building of baked clay bricks cemented with asphalt, in which the surrounding plain is very rich. This gigantic basis measured a hundred and fifty yards each way; and a tower rose from it in eight stories, each smaller than the one below it, to a height that far exceeded that of the great Egyptian pyramids. The building was for the most part solid right through, and a sloping passage that swept in wide circles round it conducted those who desired to ascend the tower, to its upper portions. In the top story, however there was a chamber where stood a golden altar, and a bed

prepared for the god Bel. In the bottom story, too, there was a chamber, in which was a golden image of the same or another god in a sitting posture, with a throne and footstool also made of gold. Before this image stood an altar upon which, when the yearly feast of Bel came round, thousands of pounds of incense were consumed. The idea of the architects in raising the temple of their god to such an enormous height, and preparing a residence for him at its summit, appears to have been that Bel only visited the high places of the earth, and could therefore stay upon the cool heights of this artificial mountain, but not in the warmer air at its foot.

As soon as the Israelites had any communications with Babel, as they certainly had in the time of Hezekiah, and probably still earlier, they would of course become acquainted, amongst other things, with this colossal building. As usual, they gave free play to their imagination in connection with it, and clothed their ideas on the subject in the form of a narrative. One of them borrowed the material for his story, to some extent, from the name Babel, which seems really to mean "god's gate," but which he translated "confusion." The following legend, accordingly, came into existence: —

In primeval times people all spoke the same language; and were therefore able to live together. Accordingly, they all went from the land of Ararat towards the east, and so came to the plain of Shinear. When they had settled there they discovered the art of baking clay into bricks, and using asphalt for cement. Delighted with their discovery, they said to one another, "Come! Let us build a city, and a tower, the top of which shall reach to heaven! So will our fame be known, and we shall not be scattered all over the earth." Then they set to work at once. But Yahweh came down from heaven to see what this city and tower really were, that mankind was so busy building, and when he had seen what they were doing, he said, "See now! All mankind are but one nation, and they all speak the same language. This is only the beginning of what they will undertake; and unless a stop is put to it, it will be impossible to keep them back, in future, from anything they take it into their heads to do. Come, then, let us go down and throw their language into confusion, that they may no longer understand each other!" So Yahweh scattered them thence over all the earth, and they stopped building the city; and it received the name of Babel (confusion), because it was there that Yahweh had confused the languages of men, and scattered them over the earth.

The chief point in this story is the writer's explanation of the difference between the languages of the various peoples. The subject is certainly well worth thinking about, and endeavoring to understand. "How is it," we ask, "that we speak English, and our neighbors German, French, or Dutch? How is it that such an enormous number of languages are spoken in different parts of the world? How are we to explain the fact that the natives of every part of the same country even, and we might almost say of every town or village, speak different dialects, so that their pronunciation or way of speaking often shows us where they come from?" The students of the science of philology are attempting to answer these questions, and many others on the same subject, and they have already bestowed a vast amount of labor upon them. This science, like so many others, has made rapid progress during the last half century, and such scholars as Grimm, Bopp, Rénan, and Max Müller, only to mention a few of the greatest, have already done much towards bringing this mysterious question somewhat nearer a solution. It is an excessively complicated subject, and scholars are not yet agreed even upon some of the fundamental points. For instance, while some believe that one original language lies at the root of all the languages of the world, or at all events that several hundred roots of words are common to them all, there are others who declare that languages having nothing in common with each other have risen among the various races of men.

The most interesting question of all, that, namely, of the origin of language in general, is as yet entirely unanswered, just as the origin of religion, the history of which has many points of similarity with that of language, still escapes our observation.

The want on the part of men of some means of communicating their feelings and thoughts to each other compelled them to express what was going on within them by sounds; and the more highly they became developed, the more knowledge of all kinds they gained, the more they thought about everything they saw, and the more they had to say to each other in consequence the better they succeeded in indicating special objects, by clearly articulated sounds and then in reproducing ideas, while they declined words and formed sentences, until gradually a language had come into existence.

But all the human race did not live together, as they parted from each other for all kinds of reasons, — to find food for instance, — and so lived and settled in different districts

There they became acquainted with various products and phenomena of nature, and had their own special experiences and sensations to express. Their way of life, the degree and nature of their civilization, and a hundred other circumstances, exercised an influence upon the form and the inflections of their words, and the construction of their sentences. The climate and the nature of the soil especially produced great alterations; until at last their language grew into something quite different from what it had been at first; just as is always happening even now.

For every language keeps gradually altering, until at last it can hardly be recognized as the same, and seems to have been succeeded by an entirely new one, and people begin to call the old way of speaking a "dead language." Among civilized nations, this change only goes on very slowly, because they preserve their words in writing; but the languages of uncivilized peoples are subject to very rapid change. There are regions in which an almost entirely new language grows up within the period of one generation, and where every village and hamlet has one of its own, quite different from the rest, made to meet the requirements of the moment, and destined after a time to be forgotten again.

The difference between the languages and dialects of nations, then, is the result of difference in their origin, abode, history, character, and modes of thought and life; so that we can often make out more or less of their past history from their language. In particular it shows us in what relations they stood to each other in former times. Those nations whose forefathers lived together for a long time after they had reached a certain stage of development, and had therefore a more or less considerable number of words, express themselves by similar sounds, modified however by the circumstances in which they have since lived. Those, on the other hand, whose forefathers parted at an earlier period do not show any such resemblance.

The science that deals with the origin, the history, and the mutual connection of the various languages is called comparative philology. The Israelite who wrote the legend of the tower of Babel had no idea of such a science. He tried to explain what seemed to him a strange phenomenon, not by finding out its natural causes, but by ascribing it to an immediate dispensation of Yahweh, who intended it to prevent men from living together any more. In doing so, however, he represents what really was one of the causes of the difference between the languages as its effect.

We may be sure that this impression of the tower of Babel was not shared by all the Israelites. Most of them, no doubt, like the Babylonians themselves, were dazzled by the magnificence of the building and its gigantic size; for in every age people have admired great works and all else that is dazzling. If, as appears from the story, the tower of Bel was not finished in the time of our writer, many of his contemporaries no doubt found this circumstance tantalizing and vexatious enough, and longed to be able to see the work completed. Quite another spirit, however, inspires the composer of our story. He takes no delight in thinking of the skill of the men who discovered the materials for such a building, or their perseverance in going on with such a work, or the sacrifices they made to prepare what they thought a suitable abode for their god. All he sees in it is a work of vainglory, the first step on the fatal road, the beginning of an attempt to storm the very heaven, the result of a mad audacity, which Yahweh did well to put under due restraint, or there was no saying what would have been attempted next!

In this story we recognize the hand of the same writer who made Yahweh express a fear, in the story of paradise, that man might become immortal, who declares the desire of knowledge to be a sin, and is afraid of nothing so much as of presumption.[1]

There is a Greek myth that breathes the same spirit, according to which the gods decreed that men should speak different languages, because they desired immortality and perpetual youth. "Divide and rule" was thus the motto of the gods, that they might hold the reins of power in their hands; while man's duty above all things was to submit to them, and not to aim at too high a position. There are other stories of Greek as well as Eastern origin, that speak of the fear entertained by the gods of the presumption of man. So the Greeks tell how when mankind, after having lived a life of purity at first, had gradually become corrupt, and impiety had gained the upper hand on earth, heaven itself was no longer safe against the passions of mankind; for there rose a race of giants who attempted to storm the dwelling of the gods, and piled the mountains one upon another to enable them to climb up to the vault of heaven. But Zeus (Jupiter), the highest of the gods, smote the heap of mountains with his thunder-bolt, and buried those who were besieging the seat of the gods under the fragments of the mass.

[1] See pp. 50 ff.

However one-sided this view of life may be, yet the warning it conveys is well worth laying to heart, and the "mountain of Nimrod" has still a precious lesson for us. For the proudest schemes are often framed by men, and even partly carried out. Love of glory has always played a great part in them, as our Israelite writer clearly saw. Mighty empires are founded. To unite the whole human race as far as possible under one sceptre, and range it round one central point, has been the constant effort, age after age, of princes and of peoples. And it is so still. The United States of North America, Russia, and Germany are the giant states of our day. A thoughtful observer is often alarmed by the projects of the most powerful princes and peoples; for sometimes it seems as if nothing were impossible to them, as if the fate of the whole world lay in their hands. But the temple of Bel cries aloud: Believe not in the omnipotence of man. The proudest schemes may be baffled. Among the architects of the great states, some unlooked-for confusion of tongues may rise, and then their work will go on no more. The union that is the work of ambition alone is shattered; for it is not the will of princes or of peoples that governs the world, but God.

Chapter X.

THE MIGRATION OF THE TERACHITES.

Gen. X., XI. 10–32.

IN the course of time the Israelites obtained some knowledge of a number of different nations, partly by coming into contact with them themselves, and partly by hearing of them from their neighbors. The more thoughtful, therefore, felt an interest in foreign countries, and were anxious to define as closely as possible their relations to each other and to Israel. This desire led some one to draw up a register of the nations of the earth, which we still have in the tenth chapter of Genesis. This table embraces seventy greater or smaller nations, and arranges them in three groups as descendants of Noah's sons, Shem, Japhet, and Ham. The form of this composition is curious, for it is that of a family

tree. "Japhet's sons" — so the account begins — "were Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, &c.; Gomer's sons, Ashkenaz, Riphath, and Togarmah;" and so the enumeration goes on, broken only by the story of Nimrod,[1] the mention of the boundaries of the land of the Canaanites,[2] and of the Joktanites,[3] and the statement that Heber's son was called Peleg (division), because in his time the world was divided,[4] which means that the human race parted into two groups. At the close of the list we are assured that in this way all the nations are descended from the three sons of Noah. Then follows the story of the building of the tower.

It is quite certain that the names contained in this register are not to be taken as signifying men. Thus the name Canaan appears amongst others; and since this word means Netherlands or Lowlands, it must be the name of a country and not of a man.

The register, however, does not give us a correct scientific division of the nations; as would be shown, even were there no other proof, by the fact that the compiler mentions a couple of tribes twice over, and even places them in quite different branches of his family tree on these two occasions.[5] But since the list was long thought to be historical, the terms, "Shemitic,"[6] "Hamitic," and "Japhetic" peoples have come into use.

The rule which the writer followed in assigning their places to the nations and tribes that were known to him, cannot be made out with certainty from his work. All sorts of conjectures have been made on this subject. Some think he made his division according to the color of the skin of the various peoples; others that it was the position of their countries that decided him, the Hamites being the inhabitants of the hot countries, the Japhetites the nations dwelling to the north, and the Shemites those that lived between the two other sets. But the fact of the Canaanites being placed among the children of Ham is fatal to all these conjectures; for these former inhabitants of the land of the Israelites, whose descendants went on living in the midst of their conquerors, were very nearly related to them, and their being put among the children of Ham rather than those of Shem, shows that love and hate were not without a voice in the composition of this list. The question, however, is too complicated to be entered into any further at present. We need

[1] Genesis x. 8–12. [2] v. 19. [3] v. 30. [4] v. 25.
[5] Genesis x. 7 and 28, 29. [6] Generally written *Semitic*.

only notice that Shem is called the first born of Noah, because the eldest son was always considered the chief. Among the sons of Shem the first rank is given to Heber,[1] the representative of the group of nations to which Israel belonged; but we are not told in this register how Israel was descended from Heber.

This information is given us in a second family tree, which we find in Genesis xi. 10 ff. Its form reminds us at once of the register of Adam's descendants down to Noah,[2] of which it seems to be the continuation. It begins as follows: "These are the family archives of Shem: Shem was an hundred years old when he begot Arphaxad, two years after the flood. After that he lived five hundred years more, and had sons and daughters." In this style it continues, giving us similar information about Selah, Heber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, and Terah. We are told something more of Terah, however, for three of his sons are mentioned by name, Abram, Nahor, and Haran, the father of Lot. Haran died before his father in Ur of the Chaldees, and Abram's wife was called Sarai, but he had no children. His brother Nahor, on the other hand, who had married Haran's daughter Milcah, had children. "Now Terah," so we read, "with Abram, Lot, and Sarai, left his dwelling-place, Ur of the Chaldees, to go to Canaan, but, during their stay at Haran, he died."

We need not stay to inquire into the original connection between this and the former register. The one we are now considering seems to have been artificially compiled; for just as there are ten generations from Adam to Noah, so there are ten more from the latter to Abram. In speaking of the names in the former register, we noticed[3] that, in all probability, they did not, in the first instance, indicate men; and it is quite evident that the names we are now considering did not; for we know the real meaning of some of them. Arphaxad — however strange the assertion may seem to those who have not seen the word in the original — is nothing but another pronunciation of "Ur of the Chaldees;" Selah signifies "sending away;" Heber, "crossing;" Peleg, "separation." The names that follow are unfortunately of unknown, or at least of doubtful, meaning, except that Haran is the name of a district. But from those of which we do understand the meaning, in connection with what the former register teaches us,[4] we can make out the chief lines of the

[1] Genesis x. 21.
[2] Genesis v.
[3] See pp. 56, 57, 66 f.
[4] Genesis x. 25.

probable history of the tribes to which Israel, among others, belonged. It comes pretty much to this: "Once the forefathers of Israel and other related tribes lived in Arphaxad, or Ur of the Chaldees. Then they left this country, and crossed the Euphrates, and for this reason they were called Hebrews, that is *men from the other side.* After this they separated into two tribes, and while the Joktanites took a south-easterly course and settled in South Arabia and along the Persian Gulf, the others passed, through the territory of Reu and Serug, south-west. Among these were the ancestors of the Israelites and their nearest neighbors, who may be called the Terachites. Some of them stayed behind and settled in Haran; the rest went on to Canaan." This is all the historical information we can gather from the register; and even this is far from certain.

These accounts of the origin of the Israelites are but scanty, and it is only natural that they should be so, for it is the same with nations as with men; — they enter the world unconsciously, and have no recollection of the beginning of their lives. It is not until they begin to think, to work, to feel that they have a calling to fulfil, in a word, to lead a life above that of the animals, that they can retain the past to any extent in their memory, or that it deserves any interest when preserved. A people must have reached a certain stage of development before it can have a history at all, and many must have floated down the stream of time without its being worth while to record their fortunes. The origin of them all, however, was alike insignificant. What recollection could be preserved of such a life as that led by these rude shepherd tribes? They ate, drank, slept, married, had children, fed their cattle, protected themselves against beasts of prey, went hunting, looked for wells, pitched their tents, broke them up again, fought for a stream or piece of pasture land, — that was the life of these wandering shepherds! In a life such as this nothing of any consequence ever occurred. It is true that even they had their joys, their sorrows, and their religious emotions, that one was superior to another and, doubtless, that some of them were above their surroundings in disposition and cultivation; but the animal nature was still supreme among them, the wants of the body kept all their powers busy, and there were none to raise themselves above the great masses by profound reflection, freshness of thought, and higher views of life. And so

generation after generation might pass away, until their posterity could not even fix the time in which their ancestors had inhabited this or that country, or lived under such and such circumstances; and their memory had altogether perished, except perhaps that some few facts in the history of their tribe — a general migration, a separation into two tribes, or the securing of a new abode — might be preserved.

This absence of anything like proper history is closely connected with the constant changes made by these wandering shepherd tribes in the places of their abode. The earliest recollection of most nations is that of a migration. Of course it was necessity for the most part that compelled these tribes to change their place of abode, and to brave the dangers involved in travelling to unknown regions, but yet they really became attached to their nomad (wandering) life, and unless they came to countries whose inhabitants had settled dwellings already, they went on wandering backwards and forwards, and showed but small affection for the soil on which they lived, until their increasing numbers gradually compelled them to choose settled homes, and bid farewell to their wandering life.

This was a turning-point in the life of these tribes. As long as they were wandering about the land, they only thought of the wants of the next few days, or at most of the half-year during which they remained on the same spot, — just sowing a single crop in order to take its produce with them on their further wanderings. Whenever they dug a well or discovered one, they filled it up so as to keep it for their own use when they visited the same pastures again. These were the highest objects of their lives. But when a settled habitation has been secured, men work for different objects. They think of their posterity: they cultivate the land, and develop the art of permanently increasing its fruitfulness. They plant fruit-trees and rear them carefully, for if they never gather their fruits themselves, yet their children will do so. Houses are built of more lasting materials, and the desire to make them suitable to their purpose, and then beautiful and luxurious, gradually calls a number of arts into existence. Dykes are built to protect the country from floods. Increased wants call commerce into life, and enlarge people's views of the world. Navigation begins to be practised, and the difficulties connected with it quicken the intellect of those who engage in it. Gradually all those who do not earn their bread by cultivating the soil, go and live together, so that villages and towns spring up. Living together makes it necessary to reg-

ulate all mutual intercourse by certain fixed rules, and so laws are made, and a regular society springs up. The relations of the villages, districts, and countries to each other are regulated in proportion to a growing feeling of the necessity of some such steps; and the undisturbed life in settled abodes makes the exercise of all kinds of arts and sciences possible, until gradually a higher life grows up.

It is not true, then, as some people declare, that the love of our country is the fruit of narrowness of mind. Our country is that portion of the earth upon which our ancestors have worked, and we are bound in our turn to consecrate our powers to the task of making its inhabitants as richly blessed as possible. The saying "My comfort is my country" is the expression of mere selfishness, and is the rule that is followed by the brutes. But for us men there are hallowed recollections bound to the soil on which our cradles were rocked, where we have gathered the fruits of the toils and the battles of our fathers, and where we ourselves first woke to the thought that God has work for us to do as well!

No such fatherland belonged to those Hebrews fifteen, sixteen or more centuries before Christ, as they journeyed southward from Armenia, and, whether driven on by enemies or seeking better pasture for their herds, migrated to Canaan. Indeed, they did not want a country of their own, and were well content with their wandering life, so they were half savages still, and their history was not worth remembering. Children of nature as they were, they lived and died with their cattle.

But in the midst of these hordes were the germs of something greater. Many nations were to spring from them: the Arabs, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and finally that people which has rescued most of the tribes connected with it from forgetfulness, the people of Israel.

Chapter XI.

A WORD ABOUT THE PATRIARCHS IN GENERAL.

Gen. XII.-L.

THE rest of the book of Genesis is taken up by accounts of Abram, Isaac, and Jacob and his family, or, as they are usually called, "the patriarchs," though this word, as we have seen, is also used for various personages belonging to a still higher antiquity. Before we begin examining the stories about them, we must stop a moment to consider the question, whether we have now the firm ground of reality beneath our feet, or are still wandering in the realm of legend.

The nature of the scenes we are going to look upon will at once prove to us that many of their features are invented; for it needs no proof that stories in which a deity goes about with men, holds conversations with them, and even eats in their tents, do not give us accurate accounts of real events. But although we cannot accept the accounts of the patriarchs as completely trustworthy, we might easily suppose that they had a historical foundation, that such men as Abram, Isaac, Jacob, and the rest did really live, and that the stories give us, on the whole, a correct account of their fortunes, though in an embellished and exaggerated form. But when we come to examine these stories closely, and to compare them with each other, we find that this is not the case, and that the names of the patriarchs must be explained in the same way as those of Arphaxad, Heber, Peleg, and others, of which we spoke in the preceding chapter. That is to say, they do not signify men, so much as groups of nations or single tribes. Abram, for instance, represents a great part of the Terachites: Lot, the Moabites and Ammonites, whose ancestor he is called; Ishmael, certain tribes of Arabia; Isaac, Israel and Edom together; Jacob, Israel alone; while his twelve sons stand for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Some of my readers, no doubt, consider this a most extraordinary assertion; and they will not be sorry, therefore, to hear some of the grounds upon which it rests. We must be very brief, however, for fear of falling into repetitions; as in dealing with the separate stories we shall be obliged from time to time to keep this meaning of the names of the patri-

archs well in view, in order fully to understand what is told us about them. We must therefore be content at present with a few arguments which will show at any rate that this view of the names, Abram, Isaac, Jacob, &c., is not a mere groundless fancy.

We must begin by forming a clear idea of the main object of these stories about the patriarchs. They are intended, in the first instance, to give us information as to the descent of Israel and certain related peoples, and to tell us which nations are descended from Abraham. These are, first, the descendants of Ishmael, Hagar's son, the inhabitants of Arabia Deserta; and, secondly, to follow the order of age through Abraham's family, the Edomites and Israelites, who are descended from Isaac; lastly, we read that Abraham took a wife of the second rank, or concubine, called Keturah, who presented him with six sons, from whom most of the tribes of Arabia Felix and Arabia Petræa sprang.[1] We will not at present dwell on the fact that the story of Abraham's marriage with Keturah, contracted long after he was a hundred years old, is quite incredible, but will only ask how we are to believe that all these nations, including the numerous Arab tribes, are descendants of Abraham. Even if we confine our attention to the Israelites, it is impossible to accept this representation; for according to the old narrators, all the Israelites are children of Jacob, whose descendants numbered seventy-two when he went to Egypt.[2] It is true that, according to Genesis, the patriarchs, as princes of their tribes, had slaves as well as children. Thus Abraham had three hundred and eighteen slaves, capable of bearing arms, that had been born in his household, and Jacob returned from Haran with a numerous band to Canaan; but these serfs were not among the "sons of Israel," and the question is still unsolved how the descendants of seventy-two individuals could become a mighty nation within a few centuries. Since the name of Keturah means "frankincense," and all the Arab tribes that are called the descendants of her sons lived in the land of frankincense, the meaning of the story of Abraham's marriage with her is obvious. It means that the Arabs and the Israelites were related to each other; and in making Keturah only a secondary wife of Abraham, the story represents her children as of less honorable descent than the offspring of Abraham by his principal wife Sarah.

Here and there the writers of the old legends themselves

[1] Genesis xxv. 1–4. [2] Deuteronomy x. 22.

point out, as it were, that the patriarchs whom they bring upon the scene as men are personifications of tribes. This is the case for instance in one of the stories about Esau, in which it is said in so many words, "Esau, that is Edom," and "Esau is the father of the Edomites."[1]

This is still clearer in the account of the close of Jacob's life. A poem is put into his mouth on this occasion, in which he pronounces a blessing or a curse upon each of his sons.[2] But the twelve tribes are evidently in the writer's mind, and he altogether forgets that the form under which he is singing of the character and the condition of these tribes, is that of the patriarch's farewell to his sons. Thus he makes Jacob use his own name as that of a people, when he puts this prediction into his mouth: "I will spread them (the Simeonites and the Levites) abroad in Jacob and scatter them in Israel,"[3] and "Dan shall judge his people like one of the tribes of Israel,"[4] and the whole poem is closed by the explanatory words, "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said concerning them."[5]

How striking is the story of Jacob's love of Benjamin, his youngest son, and after Joseph's disappearance the only child of his beloved Rachel that was left to him! How touching his unwillingness to let his darling go to Egypt with his brethren! And how it surprises us therefore to discover that this Benjamin was already the father of ten sons.[6] This shows us that the writer is telling us the fortunes of tribes under the form of a family history.

The idea of representing a nation or a tribe as a man in whose history the fortunes of the tribe were reflected, so to speak, however strange to us, was very common in ancient times. Thus the Greeks or Hellenes traced their origin to a certain Hellen, who was called the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha,[7] and whose sons Dorus and Eolus, and grandsons Achæus and Ion were said to be the fathers of the four Greek tribes, the Dorians, Eolians, Achæans, and Ionians. In something the same way Englishmen are sometimes called "Sons of Albion," and a still nearer parallel is furnished by the Dutch poets, who sometimes speak of their countrymen as the offspring of Bato, and by the Frisians, who call themselves Frizo's sons, without, of course, intending to assert that such men as Bato or Frizo ever really lived. Just in

[1] Genesis xxxvi. 1, 8, 9, 19, 43.
[2] Genesis xlix. 1–27.
[3] v. 7.
[4] v. 16.
[5] v. 28.
[6] Genesis xlvi. 21.
[7] See p. 69.

the same way, then, Abraham and his sons are not literally the ancestors of all the peoples that are called their descendants in Genesis, but are only their representatives.

If this is so, the question rises: Have we really the primeval history of the Israelite and other related tribes before us in these stories? Do they really transport us to the pre-Mosaic period? The more we try to go into the question of the origin of the legends, the more doubtful do we find the ground upon which we stand; and, therefore, while we have not the least hesitation in explaining the names of the patriarchs on the principles already stated, yet we cannot give an equally confident answer to this question as to the historical value of the traditions about them. It is possible that in some of the stories, historical traditions from the pre-Mosaic period have been preserved. The account, for instance, of Joseph's being sold as a slave by his brothers, and of his elevation to the rank of a prince in Egypt having given them the opportunity of migrating thither, may possibly embody a recollection of the fact that the tribe Joseph paved the way to Egypt for the other tribes. But this is not certain, nay it is not even likely. It is undeniable that some of the stories at least give us information, under the form of the history of these patriarchs, about the fortunes and exploits of the tribes long after the time of Moses. We shall meet with some examples of this presently.

Lastly, it may be asked: If the contents of these narratives, even when understood as tribal history, bring us down to a later period, what is the real origin of the names Abram, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, &c.? As to this, we are almost entirely in the dark. Some scholars suppose that at any rate some of these names were originally those of gods, and point out that "Abram" may mean "exalted father." But satisfactory grounds have never been made out for this view. No doubt the names of the sons of Jacob were simply those of the Israelite tribes, which might easily be used as the names of tribal fathers, since the tribes were in the habit of calling themselves "the sons of Judah, Reuben, Napthali, &c." We have already had examples in the names of Canaan and Heber,[1] of the way in which the names of countries and peoples might be treated as those of men.

It is not easy for us to form a true idea of the way in which these legends of primeval times came into existence; but

[1] Pp. 95, 96, 97.

some of the motives of the compilers can still be detected, understood, and estimated by us. Let us try to sketch, in broad lines, a history of the rise of these legends.

In the time of Moses, and even long after his death, when the Israelite tribes stood to a great extent alone, and were not yet united into one people, their religious customs were very varied and capricious. No doubt all the Israelites worshipped Yahweh as Israel's god, but every tribe and every clan, nay, many separate families or individuals, had their own special god or gods besides. In some parts of the land of Canaan ancient forms of worship were already established, and the invading tribes took part in them, either retaining the ancient gods of the place, or superseding them by others. These "Holy Places" were the centres of the national life in the districts to which they belonged. Such, for example, was the sanctuary of Beersheba. There, on the southern boundary of Canaan, where the Israelites were in constant communication with the Edomites, was a much-frequented sanctuary to which the "sons of Isaac" brought their offerings. The centre of Judah's religious life, on the other hand, was Hebron, and there the ancestor of the people was known by the name of Abram. So, again, there were sanctuaries in Shechem and in Bethel which were sought by pilgrims from the surrounding district of the tribes of Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh, who called themselves the "sons of Jacob." In the northern portion of the country Baal-Gad, *i.e.*, "the Baal of Good Fortune," or "of the Gadites," was worshipped, and in the north-west of Judah, at Bethshemesh, *i.e.*, "house of the Sun," some form of the worship of the Sun-god was established. Among the objects worshipped and held to be sacred were stones and trees, especially oak and terebinth trees.

In David's time, however, the unity of the people was established, and though it was broken again after Solomon's death, the recognition of the close relationship of all the tribes was never afterwards lost. The Israelites of the north and those of the south felt that they were brothers, and at certain periods were very closely united. The two portions of the nation were called collectively, "the people of Yahweh," and in both the influence of the Mosaic party continually increased. This party was, of course, very hostile to the ancient local forms of worship, inasmuch as they were injurious to that of Yahweh. They would gladly have removed these sacred trees and stones, therefore, and wiped

out the names of the idols. But it was not easy to do so, as the people were much attached to their local customs. The zealous upholders of the exclusive worship of Yahweh saw no chance, therefore, of getting rid of the religious usages of centuries all at once. The course they adopted, accordingly, was to try to attach a different meaning to them, to give them an orthodox coloring, if I may so express myself. The names of the various tribes and districts were made into those of men, and were then brought into connection with each other. Abram, the patriarch of Hebron, Isaac that of Beersheba, and Jacob of Bethel, became grandfather, father, and son. The anointed stone at Bethel, the consecrated oaks of Mamre (near Hebron), the sacred tree at Shechem, and the well of Beersheba, were all of them gradually made into monuments of the lives of these patriarchs. These were the spots on which they had pitched their tents, these the trees that they had planted, these the wells they had dug, and these the memorial stones or the altars they had erected. In this manner the ancient names and venerated objects were made not only harmless but actually favorable to the purer form of worship, for the patriarchs were represented as favorites of Yahweh, and as his faithful worshippers, and the holy places as the scenes of the revelations of this god of Israel.

In this sketch, I have purposely expressed myself ambiguously here and there, and have left it quite an open question what the names of the patriarchs originally meant; for this, as well as many other points, is very doubtful. But the main idea of this account of the origin of the legends of the patriarchs rests on a firm basis; the upholders of the exclusive worship of Yahweh gave them the form which they assume in these stories, so as to find a place in the worship of Yahweh for certain elements of the old-Israelite or heathen religions, such as sacred names, places, usages and objects.

In acting thus the zealous worshippers of Yahweh do not stand alone, for we can trace a similar effort amongst very various peoples, and at very different periods. Thus, in certain Asiatic states, the god Baal was made into a king, to whom the founding of a number of cities was attributed, and whose grave was pointed out in different places. The case was the same with other gods and goddesses in Egypt, Asia-Minor, Babylonia, and Greece.[1] The cause was partly a misunderstanding, but partly the desire to supersede ancient forms of

[1] See pp. 87, 88, 89.

worship. This method is often called Euhemerism, after a certain Greek philosopher, named Euhēmērus, who lived in the times of Alexander the Great, and systematically made all the Greek gods into kings and generals. But we need not go so far or climb to such a height of antiquity, to find examples of this procedure. In our own country it was practised by the preachers of Christianity, for when they brought the Gospel to our land they found its inhabitants just as much attached to their gods and feasts, their sacred usages and consecrated trees, as were those ancient Israelites whose conversion to the exclusive worship of Yahweh was the object of the writers of the legends about the patriarchs. They were ready to accept Christianity, but if only it could be managed they were very anxious to retain the names and usages to which they were accustomed. So the preachers of Christianity allowed them to keep a great many of them, but gave them a Christian interpretation. Sacred stones were marked with the cross and became memorial stones, sacred wells were made into baptismal fonts, images of gods transformed into images of saints. The consequence is that remains of the old heathen forms of worship have survived to this very day in Easter eggs, yule logs, and, on the Continent, Whitsun fires, the customs of Santa Claus, and many others. The very name, for instance, of Easter (in German Ostern) reminds us immediately of the worship of the heathen goddess Ostara, whose feast was celebrated in spring.

It is quite common, then, for religious reformers — seeing that they cannot have everything as they would wish, and that they cannot attain their object unless they make some concessions — to try to gain people over by taking a middle course, and so toning down their requirements as to allow their converts to retain some portion of their ancient beliefs or beloved usages.

But however often this path has been and is yet trodden, we have still to ask, Is it right? Does it bring us to the goal? If the goal is the triumph of some form of worship, some doctrine, or some ecclesiastical system, then doubtless it is much easier to reach the desired end by this means than by concealing nothing that we think, calling everything by its right name, forbidding what we feel is not right, and yielding nothing. But by "mixing wine with water" we degrade the view of truth for which we desire to find access, and allow many elements of the old view to creep into the new. In consequence of these proceedings on the part of their champions, both the

Yahweh-worship of Israel and the Christian church have taken up into themselves much that has been disfiguring and injurious to them.

Those who are determined to see a great and immediate result of their preaching, and are content if they can count up a large number of converts, without examining very closely how much alloy has mingled with the purity of their faith, must adopt this method. But those who are truly zealous for God and for the truth go right forward, are content with nothing short of the full demands of God, and prefer weighing their converts to counting them. What the result to themselves often is we are taught by the cross upon which Jesus died, because he would make no treaty with the world, and because his followers were therefore few in number. But just for that reason he became more than the founder of a church, he became the Saviour of the world.

One more general remark must be made about the stories of the patriarchs. Here, again, as was the case with the first eleven chapters of Genesis, we have the work of more than one writer before us. We have no difficulty in recognizing here and there the style and the thoughts of the writers who told us of Adam and Noah, of Cain and Enoch, though we cannot always make out with certainty how the accounts of the two have been woven together, and then united with those of yet others.

Sometimes the writers do not agree together. An instance occurs quite at the beginning; for while the "Book of Origins" makes Terah and his clan leave Ur of the Chaldees and go to Haran, where Terah himself dies, without assigning any religious motive to him, the older writer, without mentioning Terah at all, begins: "And Yahweh said to Abram."[1] Whence he supposes the patriarch to depart is anything but clear. Since the departure from Ur of the Chaldees immediately precedes this narrative, it is natural to suppose that that is the place referred to here as well, as is stated indeed elsewhere;[2] but in another passage[3] Haran, that is Mesopotamia, is indicated as Abram's country. When we come to the stories themselves, we shall find other instances of mutual disagreement between the narratives.

The two writers, as might have been expected, show the same peculiarities in the stories of Abram and his sons that we have already noticed. The accounts of the later writer

[1] Genesis xii. 1. [2] Genesis xv. 7. [3] Genesis xxiv. 4, 7, 10.

are rather colorless, but the older stories are full of life and variety, for in them the most ancient times are painted with all the traits and colors of a comparatively recent period; with the worship of Yahweh for instance, and most of the religious usages of the Israelites.

This is, to a great extent, what gives these narratives their charm. The deeper we penetrate into their meaning, the clearer is the insight they give us into the life of the people in whose midst they arose. But if this had been their only value they would certainly never have become so universally known and loved as they are, for this meaning is sometimes far enough below the surface, and escapes the ordinary reader. But they are precious even as sketches of character; for in the patriarchs, especially in Abraham and Jacob, we have before us the images of pious men after the heart of the writers, and since they are drawn by the hand of a warm affection, they often speak to our conscience as well as our imagination.

We shall therefore treat these stories chiefly as sketches of character. We shall indeed point out, whenever we are able, the interest that animated the compilers, and the objects they had in view in telling their stories; but for the rest, we shall speak of Abram, Hagar, Esau, Joseph, and all the others, as if they were men who really lived, and shall try to strengthen our moral life by marking their faith, and to take warning from the description of their sins.

Chapter XII.

ABRAM THE BELIEVER.

Gen. XII.

SURROUNDED by his relatives and friends, in the plain of Haran, in the northern part of Mesopotamia, dwelt Abram; and hard by his tents his friend and nephew Lot would often feed his flocks.

The two shepherd princes were rich in cattle, and a host of dependents obeyed them, while they were bound to each other by the closest ties of friendship. A striking proof of this friendship was given by Lot, when he lent an ear to his uncle,

who urged him to accompany him on a distant journey he was about to undertake. He was going away south-west, across the Euphrates, and then . . . as yet he did not know where next himself.

Why was he going to change his abode? Was he driven to it by necessity? Was there no more pasture for his cattle? Had enmity risen between him and his relatives? Or did love of change and hope of booty urge him on? Had he forgotten that all kinds of unknown dangers threatened him on his way through the lands of strangers? Not at all. However poorly his country had been blessed by the beauties of nature; nay, however parched and dry it was during many seasons of the year, still it was dear to him, and he was on the best possible terms with his relatives, the men of Nahor, and even in religion was at one with them.[1] He must go because Yahweh, his god, told him to go. Why he did so, and where he would take him, he did not know; his duty was but to obey.

So they started on their journey, these men of faith, sure that Yahweh would bring them to a good land. He had distinctly promised Abram that he would bless him and make him a great people. His friends should be blessed and his enemies cursed, and the fame of his prosperity should spread so far amongst all nations, that when any one wanted to pronounce the greatest possible blessing, he would only be able to say, "God make you blessed as Abram!"[2] They relied on the power of this god, who had given them such glorious promises.

They passed over the Euphrates and through the Syrian desert; through those wide steppes where only here and there a fruitful spot, such as those upon which Palmyra and Damascus were afterwards to rise, invited them to stay, still south-west, till they crossed the Jordan and came to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, which they found thinly populated by certain Canaanite tribes. They passed through this land too, trusting in their good swords and the might of Yahweh. They felt that they had a right to be there, and no one asked toll of them.

The first spot at which they stayed for any length of time had a strange appearance. Two mountains, of moderate height, rear themselves over against each other there. Ebal, the more northern peak, is parched and barren, but Gerizim, the more southern, rather loftier than the other, has a some-

[1] Genesis xxiv. 31. [2] Genesis xii. 3, after an amended version.

what more pleasing aspect. In the valley between these mountains, where Shechem was afterwards built, an oak of more than ordinary beauty raised its head; it was the oak of Moreh, that is, "the teacher's oak." There the wanderers pitched their tents, and Abram soon discovered that it was a holy spot, where Yahweh revealed himself and loved to receive the offerings of his servants; for here his god appeared to him and told him that he had now reached the goal of his journey, for this was the land that his posterity should receive as an inheritance. So Abram built an altar to Yahweh there, and the spot became a sacred place in Israel. The oak of Moreh, under the name of "the soothsayer's oak (Meonenim)," [1] was destined to become famous in all the country round, and to be regarded as the sanctuary of Shechem; and there the worshippers bowed down before the deity who had chosen this tree for his dwelling-place, as they approached him with supplications and with offerings, or listened to the whispering of the sacred leaves, and, full of awe, received from the lips of the soothsayers the interpretation of the sounds they had heard.

From Shechem the patriarch pursued his journey to the height of Bethel. Between this city and Ai he pitched his tents, and found again that Yahweh was with him there, and so built an altar in honor of him. This place accordingly, the name of which means "house-of-god," was no less sacred to the Israelites than Shechem.

Still pursuing their way in the same direction, the Hebrews reached the most southern regions of Canaan.

So Abram had passed through the whole of his promised land, from north to south, when he discovered that it had indeed been promised to his posterity, but not to himself; for a famine compelled him to leave the barren region of southern Canaan for the fertile Egypt, and to sojourn in a strange land, instead of in the country, which his hopes had already taught him to regard as his home.

But even there he was to receive a wonderful proof of the faithfulness and power of his god; for when he drew near to Egypt his faith grew weak, and he was afraid. He came there as a stranger; and his wife Sarai, who was very beautiful, was with him. Suppose — thought he — the inhabitants of the land cast their eyes upon her, they are sure to kill me, and then make her marry one of them. So he told his wife to say she was his sister, so that if they seized her they might give him rich presents as her brother, instead of killing him as her

[1] Judges ix. 37.

husband. It all fell out just as he had expected. The king himself, hearing of Sarai's beauty, had her brought to him to become one of his wives, and presented Abram, supposing him to be her brother, with a great number of sheep, cattle, asses, and male and female slaves, so that he became very rich. But this was not the greatest blessing that Yahweh intended to confer upon him. He was about to make his servant utterly ashamed of his previous fear, and to show that he could defend him even in a foreign country. At his command, one disaster after another fell upon the king and his household, and he soon perceived that all this happened to him because he had taken a married woman into his harem. So he sent for Abram, and reproached him with the deceit by which he had brought him into danger of committing so great a sin. Then he ordered his people to protect and to help Abram, and all that he had.

This adventure of Sarai's is told not so much to Abram's disgrace as to Yahweh's honor. The writer does not appear to have seen anything wrong in Abram's conduct. This shows that he had no very exalted idea of integrity, as we shall see indeed from other passages as well as this. It is very instructive to compare our story with the account of the same event given by another writer,[1] for it shows us how low a position the Israelites took in matters such as these. This other writer removes the scene of the adventure to Gerar, in the land of the Philistines, and says that Abimelech, the king, who had taken Sarai away from Abram, was warned by God in a dream that she was a married woman, and reproached the patriarch for his deceit. But he defended himself by saying that Sarai really was his half-sister, and that ever since they had left their fatherland and begun their wanderings, he had begged her to call herself his sister for fear he should be injured for her sake. Abimelech was perfectly satisfied by this excuse, loaded the patriarch with gifts, and made a present to Sarai also, with the words, "May this make you close your eyes to all the wrong that has been done you. May justice thus be done you."[2] It looks very much as if this writer wished to acquit the patriarch of the lie by which he was disgraced in the older narrative; but if so he did not see that he failed to make the affair any more creditable to his hero after all. For such shuffling is just as bad as a lie; nay, a premeditated, persevering, systematic

[1] Genesis xx. [2] After an amended version.

deceit really tells more against a man's character than a lie which is the result of a momentary fright.

And, again, neither writer seems to have felt how unutterably base it was in Abram to tell this lie, not for the sake of rescuing his wife, but for the sake of turning it to account in his own private interest if she were taken away from him.

But enough of this. The whole story represents Abram as the believer, who, "in obedience to Yahweh's commandment, goes out indeed to a land which he shall receive for an inheritance, but without knowing whither he goes."[1] In this character we shall meet him again and again, and in this lies the deep and lasting significance of Abram, as he is represented in Genesis. He is the hero of faith.

There are people in the world who shrug their shoulders when they hear any one speak of faith, and take a special pride in not having any themselves. Very often they are better than their word, and have more faith in their hearts than they are at all aware of; while their contempt for faith is the result of their not understanding what it means. If it were not so we could have but small respect for any man who thinks that faith is worthless, for it is just in having faith that the noblest of mankind differ from the common herd.

Properly to understand what faith is and what it is worth, we must first understand what is meant by God speaking to a man. In this story, and in many others, God is represented as holding conversations with men, and telling them various things in actual words. It needs no proof that this is not what really takes place, for no man can hear God's voice with his outward ears. He speaks in our conscience. Whenever our duty becomes clear to us, then we hear the voice of God giving us commands; and whenever we feel that our true happiness lies in obedience to this voice, we receive promises from God. Now, if we are firmly convinced that these commands and these promises are not merely imaginary but are true, then we may be said to have faith.

Faith shows itself in various ways. It is often mingled with products of the imagination, that is with superstition. If, for instance, Abram felt, as the later Israelite writers say he did,[2] that he must flee from the land of his fathers, because he was in danger of falling into idolatry there; if he saw that Yahweh would bless him elsewhere too, and

[1] Hebrews xi. 8.

[2] Joshua xxiv. 2, 14, 15. Flavius Josephus. Judith v. 6 ff.

that it is better for a man to be a wanderer on the earth and to worship his god in uprightness than to remain in his fatherland and live a life of sin, then that was faith. But if he thought that the land of Canaan was the precise reward assigned to his obedience, then that was all imagination, and therefore superstition. For though in the legend this promise is both made and kept, yet in reality earthly possessions are not the reward of piety. We shall often see from our Bible-stories that, as a rule, the faith of the Israelites was clothed in imperfect forms, that it was mingled with superstition. Even with Christians this is very often the case. But in whatever form it shows itself, however far it is from perfect purity, faith is a treasure always. A man with faith is in every case something more than a man without it, for faith is a power that rescues him from the tyranny of his sensual nature and gives him strength to make sacrifices.

All reformers and all the noblest benefactors of mankind have had faith, and one of the followers of Jesus said in honor of him that he was "perfect in faith."[1]

Chapter XIII.

ABRAM'S GENEROSITY.

Gen. XIII., XIV.

WHEN Abram — so the narrator goes on — had escaped this danger in Egypt, he returned with his wife and all his possessions to the south of Judah. Lot still accompanied him, and they returned along the road they had come by, always halting in the same places as before, till they pitched their tents once more between Bethel and Ai. There Abram offered a second sacrifice to Yahweh on the altar he had already erected to him.

But gradually it became clear that the two shepherd princes could not live together much longer; for they were both of them rich in flocks. Not that this would have made it impossible for them to remain in the same neighborhood if only they had had free play; but the Canaanites and Perizzites had possession of a great deal of the land, and the

[1] Hebrews xii. 2.

Hebrews had to be content with the portions that these tribes did not require for themselves. So the land became too small for them, and though Abram and Lot still continued to be good friends, their dependants were always quarrelling about pastures and wells. Now, as each of them kept hearing his own shepherds complain of the other's, and was naturally inclined to side with his own servants, there really seemed to be some danger of their falling out with each other in the end.

Abram was the first to see this, and however much he would have liked to go on living with his dearly-loved kinsman, he thought it better for them to part in peace before it was too late, than to remain together and endanger the bond of brotherly love which united them. So he proposed to Lot that they should separate, and, with open-hearted generosity, left him the choice as to which way he would go. He had no wish to dictate to his nephew; if he went to the right, he would go to the left himself, or if Lot took the left, he would take the right.

Lot was far inferior to Abram in generosity. He had followed him from the distant land, and so had had faith in the glorious promises made by Yahweh to Abram. But now self-interest overpowered him. Instead of asking what was the wish of his uncle, the chief of his tribe, he took advantage of his open liberality, and chose as his portion the valley of the Jordan. From a worldly point of view he had made a very wise selection, for the valley of the Jordan was a splendid country, and the southern portion especially, where the Dead Sea now is, but where Sodom and Gomorrah formerly lay, was a true "garden of Yahweh," a paradise, like Egypt in fruitfulness. But there was a dark side to the settlement in this region, for Lot's heart was drawn towards the cities. And though he did not desert the simple shepherd life at once, yet he pitched his tents hard by Sodom, and before long settled in the city itself. This was a source of misery to him against which no fruitfulness of the soil could weigh, for the inhabitants of these cities were great sinners before Yahweh, and his wrath would sooner or later blaze forth against them.

So Lot's covetousness led him on to misfortune, and, moreover, by choosing to go to the extreme limit, and as it were to quit the land, he forfeited all the claim of his posterity to Canaan.

On the other hand, Abram, who obeyed the will of Yah-

weh, received a renewal of the promises when his nephew had departed. It was as though his god would make it plain to him that the departure of Lot in no way affected his promises, and that he himself, and not his nephew, was to be the father of the holy nation that would possess Canaan. "Look round you!" — such were the words of Yahweh — "Look towards every quarter of heaven, towards Lebanon and towards the boundary of Egypt, towards the Jordan and towards the Mediterranean Sea; all this land shall be an eternal heritage for your posterity, which I will make as countless as the dust of the earth. Pass through the country in every direction, and know that you are the father of its future possessors."

Abram obeyed, and journeyed southward. Thus he came to Hebron, or more properly to the district in which a city was afterwards built, called Kirjath Arba[1] until it was conquered by the Israelites, and after that Hebron. Here there were splendid groves of oak-trees belonging to the Canaanite Mamre.[2] For whole centuries the Canaanites, and after them the Israelites, would worship their gods at this spot, and gaze with especial awe and reverence at one gigantic oak. Down to the first century of our era the people in the neighborhood of Hebron would tell how this tree was as old as the world, or would boast that it had grown from a stick thrust into the ground by Abram. By this grove the Patriarch pitched his tent after receiving Yahweh's promise. There he was to learn how well it was for him that he had not gone to the valley of Jordan, that seemed so tempting, and how constantly his god protected and helped him.

For it happened that several princes from the north-east, of whom Kedor-laomer, an Elamite king, was the chief, declared war against the kings of Sodom[3] and four other cities that lay in the so-called valley of Siddim. For twelve years the inhabitants of the valley of Siddim had been tributary to Kedor-laomer, but then they threw off his yoke. Hardly had a year gone by, however, before this prince appeared with an army to reduce them once more to submission. The march of the eastern kings was triumphant. They came down from the north, defeated the Rephaites at Ashteroth-Karnaim, conquered several other tribes east of the Dead Sea, marched round Mount Seir, and penetrated into the desert of Arabia Petræa as far as Hazezon Tamar, to the west of the valley of Siddim. Then the King of Sodom and his allies advanced to meet him, — five against four! But, in spite of this, they

1) The city of Jesus.
2) That belongs Mamre &c.
3) Their secret &c.

were defeated and dispersed, while numbers of fugitives fell into the wells of asphalt, of which the valley was full, and the rest escaped to the hills. Thereupon the eastern kings took off the cattle and the provisions that they found in their enemies' cities; and, amongst other captives, Lot, who lived in Sodom, was carried off, with all that he had.

News of all this was brought to Abram, who had pitched his tents in the neighborhood of Mamre, Eshcol, and Aner, with whom he had entered into an alliance. No sooner had he received the dismal tidings than he determined to hasten to the rescue. Thinking nothing of the danger to himself, and forgetting how badly Lot had behaved to him, he called together all those of his dependants who had been born his serfs, thinking that he could rely upon their fidelity more confidently than upon that of the slaves he had bought. They were three hundred and eighteen strong, and Abram's allies added some bands of their own dependants to help them. With this force Abram set out in pursuit of the foreign princes. Overtaking them at Dan, one of the most northern points of Canaan, he divided his men into three companies, fell upon them by night, and scattered abroad the whole army of the four chieftains against whom the five kings of the valley of Siddim had not been able to hold their ground. Right on to Hobah,[2] north of Damascus, he pursued the fugitives; and all the booty they had made, including the captives of war whom they were carrying off as slaves, fell into his hands. Thus Lot was rescued with the rest.

As the victorious Abram was returning, the humbled King of Sodom met him in the valley of Shaveh (afterwards called "King's Valley"[1]) and implored him to be content with the cattle and the other booty he had seized from the enemy, but to give their liberty to the captives that had fallen into his hands, and were therefore his slaves according to the rights of war. At the same time Abram was visited by Melchizedek, the King of Salem; who brought him bread and wine, and, being a priest of the most high God, blessed him with the words: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High, of the All-ruler! And glory be to this Most High, for he has put your enemies into your power!" And Abram gave him the tenth part of all he had. This did not prevent his being bountiful and generous to the King of Sodom, by whose prayer he answered: "I swear by Yahweh the All-ruler that I will keep nothing that was yours, no not so much as a thread or a shoe-

[1] 2 Samuel xviii. 18.

1 Samuel 2 Sam.
2 Jer., Ezek.

string! — for you shall never be able to say, 'I have made Abram rich!' Of course I am not bound to make good what my men have eaten, nor can I dispose of that part of the booty that falls to the share of my allies, as a reward of the help they have given us; but as for me, I will never enrich myself at your expense."

There is nothing in the chapters containing this narrative, that has excited the attention of the commentators so much as this meeting between Melchizedek and Abram, and many a brain has been sorely perplexed by the questions, "Where did the city of Salem lie?" "How came there to be a priest of God most high, to whom Abram did homage, in the midst of a population that is always branded as idolatrous?" Indeed, there is something enigmatical about this figure, and it is hard to explain how Abram, who had not his possessions with him, could give him a tithe of them all. We leave it, however, to those who look upon the narrative as history, to remove these difficulties. If we take it to be a legend, and only ask what the compiler meant by it, then the explanation is simple enough. Melchizedek — the word means "king of righteousness" — is a symbolical name; Salem is Jerusalem. Not that this city ever really bore the name of Salem, for until it was conquered by David it was called Jebus; but the writer called the city by the last half of its ordinary name, that is *Salem* or "peace," because he wanted to speak of Jerusalem, but yet not to use its old Canaanite name. The main point in the story is that Melchizedek is a priest, and as such blesses Abram and receives the tithes, and its object is to exalt the priesthood of Jerusalem, which claimed homage and tithes from every one.

The account of Melchizedek does not appear to come from the writer of the rest of the story, who never hesitates to use names taken from his own times when speaking of earlier ages. Thus he speaks of Bethel, Ai, Hebron, and Dan as if places so called had existed before the conquest of Canaan by the Israelites, and he would, therefore, have been at no pains to choose such expressions as "Salem" and "the most high God," but would have spoken of "Jerusalem" and "Yahweh" without more ado. Besides, the meeting with Melchizedek is very strangely placed in the story in the middle of the account of the meeting with the King of Sodom. In the Israelite literature we only find one single reference to this story,[1] but, as if to make amends, the Christians are never tired of dwelling

[1] Hebrews vii. 20 ff.

upon it. First of all comes the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who sees in Melchizedek an indication of the high-priestly rank of Jesus, and explains the statement that Abram, the father of the priestly tribe of Levi, paid him tithes after having received his blessing, as a prophetic allusion to the doing away of the Jewish laws about the priesthood of the Levites.[1] Later teachers of the church followed the example of this writer, and discovered in Melchizedek all kinds of meanings, which were furnished them by the so-called "allegorical interpretation of scripture."

The great number of the proper names that occur in the account of the campaign of the eastern kings against the princes of the valley of Siddim has led many historical students to hope that they might find in this narrative an ancient and trustworthy monument of history. But when we look more closely into it we are disappointed in this hope, for it is quite evident that some of the names have a symbolic meaning. Thus one of Kedor-laomer's allies is called "king of the heathens" (authorized version "king of nations"), which is surely a strange title. The name of Bera, the king of Sodom, means "son of ungodliness," and Birsha, the name of the king of Gomorrah, "son of the wicked." We can hardly suppose that these are historical names! Besides this, — the main incident in the story, — the defeat of the eastern kings by such a little band as Abram's, is improbability itself.

It seems to be true, however, that in very early times there really was a powerful kingdom, the seat of which was in Elam, that held sway as far as to the borders of Palestine. The names of the monarchs of this kingdom often began with Kudur (Kedor), and as one of their gods was called Lagamar, it is quite possible that Kudur-lagamar (Kedor-laomer) is the real name of some ancient king of Elam, though it has not yet been found upon any inscription.

For the rest, the legend needs no elaborate explanation. The main thought is that Abram, the believer, is under Yahweh's protection; for when Lot has gone his way Yahweh confines his promises to Abram alone, lends him his help so that he can conquer these mighty kings with his little band, and makes him so rich that he has no need to keep any of the booty he has won by war.

Abram, on his side, appears in this narrative as the disinterested and generous hero who gives Lot the first choice of

[1] Hebrews vii. 20 ff.

country, risks his life to rescue him, refuses to keep the spoil of war, and freely gives his tithes to the priest. A noble figure! What a different spirit these actions breathe from that which is commonly met with in the world! Just think how often men quarrel for the best portion of anything, stand upon their rights, seize everything pleasant for themselves, consider whether they are called upon to give up the smallest thing to which they have a legal claim, hesitate to help a man "because he never did as much for them," will run no risk for another's sake for fear they should suffer themselves, like to be paid for any services they may have done, and calculate for how little they can get off when they are asked for a contribution to religious or any other useful institutions! Self-interest is a most powerful incentive, and such a character as Abram's is but rare!

This is only natural, for man enters life as a selfish being. Look at children quarrelling over some trifle, and see how each begins by looking after himself! A power must come into their hearts that can blunt the eagerness of their self-seeking, a power that can resist their inborn selfishness of disposition.

Now faith is such a power. Why should not Abram be generous when he trusted so perfectly in his god? Why should he not be ready to give Lot his choice as to the country he would take in possession? Yahweh took care of him. Why should he hesitate to go out to battle? Did not the angel of Yahweh encamp round about them that feared him?[1] Why should one who had Yahweh's promises keep the spoil of war for himself? It was not for the sake of booty that he had done as he did.

So powerful has faith been in every age; so powerful is it still. This is why a man who has faith is generous and liberal, and rises by his faith above the common run of men, who seek nothing but their own advantage. Those who have faith, no less than others, like to grow rich, and their carnal nature urges them, too, to take the best for themselves and to run no risks for any one else; but they find a yet greater treasure in contentment, cheerfulness, quickness of sympathy, love; in a single word — a rich inner life; and they trust that this spiritual happiness will ever increase within them. Those who are so rich cannot be mean. Those who feel that they are happy, and cherish in their hearts a living hope, cannot bring themselves to be for ever calculating what will be most

[1] Psalms xxxiv. 7.

to their own advantage; and, without any effort, they bring into practice that command of Jesus which sounds so strange and exaggerated: "Give to him that asks of you, and turn not away from him who would borrow of you."[1]

Chapter XIV.

THE OATH OF YAHWEH.

Gen. XV.

THE battle was over, and Lot had gone on his way. Abram could return to his tents and once more engage in his peaceful occupations, keeping his sword and his arrows sharp for the bear and the lion only. But now a heaviness of heart he had never felt before overpowered him. In the might of faith he had lived and worked, he had overthrown his enemies though far outnumbered by them, and had generously given away the treasure, and as long as he had been active he had felt no weariness. But now his lower nature re-asserted its claims and made itself felt by his very soul. Abram was sad at heart. He thought of the fatherland he had left. He thought of the dangers that surrounded him. He strained his eyes in vain to see into the darkness of the future. Yahweh had promised him the land that he had passed through; but how was this promise to be fulfilled? and who was to enjoy its fulfilment? He had no children, and both he and his wife were now so old that they had given up all hope of ever having any. His relations all lived far away. Lot had left the promised land of his own free will. So he had no heir but his slave Eliezer, who had indeed been born in his household, and was almost as dear as a son to him, but yet was not "his own." Abram was in deep depression.

But his god knew how to relieve this weariness of spirit, which might easily have led to loss of faith. Yahweh, who had already appeared to him more than once, came to him again. It was night, and Abram heard Yahweh in a vision calling to him, "Fear not, Abram! I am your shield, and will give you a rich reward." But he answered in despair, "O Lord Yahweh! what fortune can you give me? I go on

[1] Matthew v. 42.

my way childless, and Eliezer will be my heir, for I have no children."

Such was his complaint; but the answer that fell upon his ear was beyond measure comforting: "Not your slave, but your own son shall be your heir." And when Yahweh led him out of his tent he saw that this promise was not meant for a mere idle word. It was a glorious night. The moon had not risen, and the stars twinkled by thousands in the sky. "Look up!" said Yahweh. "Can you count the stars? Even so countless shall your descendants be." And however wonderful this word appeared, yet Abram kept down the voice of doubt in his heart. Yahweh's promise was so sure! He could not help accepting it with firm belief. Thus rest was brought to his soul. All that had troubled him was gone, as if by a magic touch. He no longer thought of his fatherland with pain, no longer saw dangers all around him: and, as for the future, his posterity should possess Canaan. How could it be? Nay that was as Yahweh should direct.

Now that his faith was established as to the main point, he was to gather the fruit of his trustfulness, and to learn how completely he had gained Yahweh's favor by it. "I Yahweh have brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees" — so his god went on to address him — "to give you this land for a heritage." Abram now believed in this promise without reserve; but he knew by experience how easily the shadow of doubt might fall upon his soul, so he answered, "Lord, give me a sign, that I may know it certainly." And Yahweh granted the request.

By the direction of his god the patriarch was to make the needful preparations for a solemn sacrifice in confirmation of a treaty. For this purpose he took an ox of three years old, a goat and a ram of the same age, and a pair of doves. He cut each of the larger animals into two parts, but left the birds undivided; then he arranged all these parts upon the ground, the two halves of the same animal opposite each other. When the vultures and kites, attracted by the flesh, flew forward towards it, he chased these unclean creatures away. The bleeding flesh must lie there unpolluted, so that when Yahweh came to conclude the treaty he might pass between the parts.

In patient, but eager expectation, Abram watched till the sun went down. When it had vanished behind the horizon, a deep sleep fell upon him; all at once he was wrapped in darkness, but it was not the natural darkness of the night.

Amazement laid hold of him; the thick black darkness in which Yahweh dwells closed round him and weighed upon his breast. Hark! it is the voice of Yahweh: "Know that your posterity shall sojourn in a strange land; there they shall be enslaved and oppressed. For three generations they shall remain among the strangers, because the measure of the sins of the Amorites, who are to be punished by your posterity, will not be full till then. But, though I leave them there to sigh so long, I will not forget my promise. And the people that oppress them shall fall under my avenging justice: the fourth generation shall rescue itself from the yoke of slavery, and shall return to this land, its heritage, laden with booty. As for you, O Abram, in a blessed old age you shall go to your fathers in peace and be buried."

Such was the promise of Yahweh that sounded from the darkness after the sun had set. But look! What is that appearing suddenly like a smoking furnace and a flame of fire? Yahweh himself was there, and passed between the parts of the sacrificial animals to confirm his promise with an oath.

Thus Yahweh swore to Abram that his posterity should possess the whole land of Canaan, from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates, the land of the Kenites and of all the other tribes that were settled there.

There is one passage in this story that I have intentionally avoided rendering accurately, because there is a contradiction in it, that calls away the attention of any one who notices it from the general drift of the story. When Yahweh is foretelling to Abram all that is to befall his posterity, and how they are to be oppressed in a strange land, — in saying which the writer is of course thinking of the slavery in Egypt — the promise is added that the fourth generation shall depart thence.[1] All this I told you, but did not add that side by side with it stands this other prophecy,[2] "for four hundred years shall the strangers oppress them." These two predictions do not agree together, for the space of four generations is far less than that of four centuries. This contradiction shows how the story is put together from the work of two writers, one of whom (the older) estimated the length of the stay of the Israelites in Egypt at four generations,[3] while the other put it at about four centuries.[4] This little fact also

[1] Gen. xv. 16.
[2] v. 13.
[3] Exodus vi. 16, 18, 20, and elsewhere.
[4] Exodus xii. 40.

shows us what free use an ancient Israelite author made of his materials, and how very uncritical people were in those days.

But this only refers to a point of minor importance; and we have one or two things of more consequence to notice in this story. To understand it rightly, we must remember that it was customary among the Israelites, as well as among other nations of antiquity, to confirm a treaty that was being made, by sacrifices. And as sacrificial animals, therefore, were slaughtered on these occasions, concluding a treaty was called "striking," or "slaying a treaty." Even we still use the expression, "to strike a bargain." It seems that the solemnities practised by the Israelites on such occasions were not always the same, but what is here described was one form of them. At any rate, it is referred to several times elsewhere.[1] They cut one or more beasts into halves, and laid the pieces along the two sides of the path by which the parties making the promise were to go, so that they would pass between these parts. The meaning of the ceremony, which was most likely expressed in words at the same time, appears to have been as follows: "May the fate of this sacrificial beast, hewn into two halves, fall upon him who violates this treaty and breaks this promise!" What the Israelites themselves were accustomed to do when they took their most solemn oaths, is here related of their god Yahweh. When he promised Abram a numerous posterity, he did so in the most solemnly impressive manner possible, by passing between the parts of all the animals suitable for a sacrifice, so that Abram might never doubt the certainty of his promise again.

The way in which Yahweh is here described gives us a glance into the ideas of the Israelites about their god. A terrific darkness is the first indication of his presence, for Yahweh dwells in the darkness.[2] For this reason there was no light in the inmost compartment of the temple, in the holiest place, where Yahweh was enthroned. Strangely in contrast with this is the form under which Yahweh himself appears — the flame of fire. This symbol occurs not only in this passage, but in so many others as to make it perfectly evident that the Israelites thought of Yahweh under this form more than under any other, and believed the consuming fire to be the true expression of the being of their god.[3] As

1 Jeremiah xxxiv. 18, 19. Genesis xxi. 27.
2 Exodus xx. 21. Deuteronomy iv. 11.
3 Isaiah iv. 5, x. 17, xxx. 27 ff., xxxi. 9, xxxiii. 14. Amos v. 6. Ezekiel viii. 2, x. 4, &c.

an illustration of this idea, I will quote part of a psalm,[1] containing a description of Yahweh coming to help his favorite. The age of the song, which is ascribed to David in the superscription, is uncertain, but at any rate it is from the time before the captivity.

I will praise thee, O Yahweh, my strength!
Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.
My god is my rock, on which I trust,
My shield and the horn that saves me, my tower.
When I cried "Praise ye Yahweh"
I was saved from the might of my foes.
Billows of death surrounded me.
Streams of terror made me afraid.
The bands of the shadow-land had already laid hold of me.
The snares of death were round me.
Then I cried to Yahweh in my distress,
Yea, I cried aloud to my god.
He heard my voice from his palace,
And my cry broke through to his ear.
Then the earth trembled and heaved,
The roots of the mountains shuddered
And heaved because he was wrath.
Smoke rose up in his nostrils,
A consuming fire from his mouth,
Coals blazed forth from him.
He bowed the heavens and came down
With storm-clouds under his feet.
He rode on a thunder-cloud and flew,
And shot forth on the wings of the wind.
He veiled himself in a mantle of darkness,
And shrouded himself in dark waters and masses of cloud.
By the brightness before him his clouds were broken,
By hail and coals of fire.
And Yahweh thundered in the heavens,
The voice of the Highest was heard.
He shot forth his arrows and scattered my foes,
Countless flashes of lightning to confound them.
The beds of the waters were uncovered,
The foundations of the earth laid bare,
At the rebuke of Yahweh,
At the blast of the breath of his nostrils.
He stretched out his hand from on high and took me,
He drew me forth from the stormy waters,
From my mighty foemen did he deliver me,
From those that hated me, and were stronger than I.

Such a description as this shows us how the religion of the Israelites, like that of other peoples, was at first a worship of nature, and how nothing made such a deep impression upon them as the thunder-storm, with the flickering and flashing lightning. The thunder-storm, therefore, more than anything else, made them think of the action of some higher power, and they thought of their god for the most part as a dreadful being who inspired them with terror, as a consuming fire.

[1] Psalm xviii. 1–17. 2 Samuel xxii. 2–18.

Gradually their religious life was more or less shaken free from the impressions caused by the phenomena of nature.

For us, such a representation of the deity has little or no value. At best it only speaks to our imagination and not to our heart. When we speak of the thunder as God's voice, and the lightning as his messenger, we are simply making use of a poetical form of speech, that has nothing to do with our real religious life; and, indeed, we should be shocked by such descriptions as that of the Psalm just quoted, if any one of our own day were to give them as the genuine utterance of his own heart.

There is certainly progress here, but it is not genuine progress, unless our reverence for God is as great as ever. God's majesty is not revealed in nature alone. He speaks sternly to us too, in our consciences, in the severe demands of the moral law, in the inexorable punishment he inflicts on sin, in the self-reproach and misery by which he teaches us that he cannot be "mocked."[1]

Our god dwells in the darkness. He is a consuming fire. So spoke the ancient Israelite as he gazed, with a shudder, into the black gloom of night or the dark depths of the thunder-clouds, and trembled as he saw the heavens all a-glow with lightning, as if wrapped in flames. Our god is a consuming fire, he said again in later times, when his conscience was troubled, and he felt ready to sink under the burden of his sins. Our god is a consuming fire[2] — that word still expresses an awful truth, felt by every man who understands the extent of his duty, who is weighed down by the thought of his trespasses, who knows not how he can be rescued from the black night that sometimes falls upon his soul.

He who has never felt anything like this is not able to enjoy as yet the full comfort of the faith that God is our Father.

[1] Galatians vi. 7. [2] Hebrews xii. 29.

Chapter XV.

HAGAR.

Gen. XVI.

ABRAM'S faith in the promise of Yahweh was severely tested; for ten years went by, after he had reached the land of Canaan, and still he had no hope of offspring. Then Sarai grew impatient, and began to wonder whether she was destined to be the mother of the future chief of Abram's tribe. For in promising a son to him, Yahweh had never promised one to her, and in her doubt and sadness she believed that she was never to have the joy of clasping a child of her own to her bosom! But she could not acquiesce in this. She could not bear the thought of going down to the grave childless. No! This misery, this shame — for so it was considered in Israel — must not be hers! There was one way to escape it, a way which strikes us as very extraordinary, but in which there was nothing shocking to the ideas of antiquity or at variance with its customs. She gave her slave-girl to her husband as a secondary wife, intending, should she have any children to adopt them as her own. Thus she tried, as the Israelites called it, "to build up her house by her slave-girl." The slave who was thus made the wife of her master was Hagar, an Egyptian.

It is easy to imagine how unpleasant the relations between Hagar and her mistress gradually became. The servant, especially when she began to have hopes of being a mother, forgot more and more completely the respect she owed to Sarai, and began at last to treat her childless mistress with undisguised contempt. The latter complained of her conduct to Abram, and reproached him indirectly with paying the slave-girl too much honor. "May the reproach I suffer fall upon you!" she said, "Now that my slave is expecting to become a mother she despises me. May Yahweh judge between you and me!" Abram could only remind her of the authority she had over her own servant, and the mistress, now enraged by envy, made such ample use of it that Hagar could no longer endure the treatment she experienced, and forgetting that her flight would take away all her hopes of ever seeing her child exalted to the rank of Abram's heir and

the chief of his tribe, she left the tents of her master and set out for her own country.

But she had not got far on her journey before the angel of Yahweh met her by a well, on the way to the wilderness of Shur, and asked her where she came from and where she was going. She answered that she was trying to escape from her mistress Sarai. But the angel said, "Go back to your mistress and humble yourself before her. If you find this hard to do, comfort yourself by thinking what the future has in store for you. I will give you countless descendants. The son to whom you are about to give birth shall be called Ishmael, that is *God hears*, for Yahweh has heard the complaint of your oppression. Your child will be a man like a wild-ass;[1] he will be against every one, and every one will be against him; and he will dwell to the east of all his brethren."

Then Hagar called the name of Yahweh, who had spoken to her, "Thou art a god that lets himself be seen," for she said, "Do I really live, after I have seen (him)?" So they call the well at which this meeting took place, the well Lahai-Roi. It lies between Kadesh and Bered. So Hagar went back to Abram and soon saw the angel's promise fulfilled, for she gave birth to a son, and called him "Ishmael."

The object of this story is to give an account of the Ishmaelites, as the Israelites called the wandering Arab tribes. It shows us that the Israelite did not deny his relationship to these Arabs, but looked upon them as his brethren, though he did not consider them his equals. According to him they were indeed Abram's children, but their mother was nothing but a slave. It was true that Ishmael was older than the forefather of the Israelites, or in plain language, that the Bedouins, or "sons of the desert," had existed as an independent people before the Israelites, and were their own masters when Israel still bowed beneath the yoke of slavery in Egypt; but their mother was an Egyptian, that is to say, they had not preserved the purity of their blood, but had intermarried with the Egyptians.

This legend, like many others, is associated with a particular spot. For the well Lahai-Roi, according to the story, owes its name to the appearance of the angel who foretold the future lot of her son to the Egyptian handmaid. The statement that the well in question lies between Kadesh and Bered gives us but little help in finding it again, for the name

[1] After an amended version.

of Bered is quite unknown to us. Nor does the repeated mention of the well in the stories about Isaac[1] bring us much further. Nor again does the name itself give us any indication about the well, for the real meaning of Lahai-Roi, which our writer seems to have translated "there is sight for the living," is uncertain. From very early times, however, the natives have pointed out a well a little to the south of Beersheba, which they call "the well of Hagar." Its position suits the direction of Hagar's flight from Hebron to the wilderness of Shur, which stretches along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, between the south-western border of Palestine and Egypt. We may therefore suppose this well to be the one intended.

Let us turn for a moment to the country and the people of the Ishmaelites!

Arabia is the name given to the vast extent of land washed on the south-west coast by the Red Sea, on the south-east by the Indian Ocean, on the north-east by the Persian Gulf, and bounded on the north by Palestine, Syria and the Euphrates. Geographers usually divide it into three parts, Arabia Felix, Arabia Petræa and Arabia Deserta, that is Fortunate Arabia, Stony Arabia and Desert Arabia, but the natives know nothing of this division. Arabia Felix is by far the greatest, for this name is given to the whole peninsula between the three seas just mentioned, while the extreme western corner only, together with the peninsula of Sinai and Mount Seir, is called Arabia Petræa, and the desert that lies between Palestine and the Euphrates, Arabia Deserta. This third portion of Arabia was the dwelling-place of the Ishmaelites, of whose ancestor it was foretold, as we saw just now, that he should live to the east of all his brothers.[2] It is a hilly and desert land, lying rather high, and almost always scorched beneath a burning sun. Its vegetation is thin, and it swarms with serpents and beasts of prey. The wells are but few, and most of them are brackish and sulphurous, and in many cases most offensive to the smell. Sometimes the scorching and suffocating blast of the terrible Simoom sweeps over these steppes.

Of the tribes who inhabited this country twelve were known to the Israelites, and were called the sons of Ishmael by them.[3] Among these the Nabateans (Nebajoth) and the Kedarenes (Kedar) were the most important. The Israelites

[1] Genesis xxiv. 62, xxv. 11.
[2] Genesis xvi. 12, xxv. 18, after an amended version.
[3] Genesis xxv. 13–18.

distinguished between these Ishmaelites and certain other Arab tribes, most of whom lived in Arabia Felix, but some of whom, such as the Midianites, were often to be found in Arabia Deserta or Petræa. They called these other Arabs the sons of Abram and Keturah.[1]

The angel told Hagar that Ishmael would be "a wild-ass of a man," and we may see what an Israelite understood by this expression from the addition, "his hand against every man, and every man's hand against him," and also from the following description of the animal to which he is compared, taken from the book of Job:[2]

> Who has let the wild-ass go free,
> And who has loosened his bonds?
> I (Yahweh) have made the wilderness his home,
> And the barren moor-land his dwelling,
> He scorns the wealth of the city;
> He heeds not the driver's cry,
> He ranges the hills as his pasture,
> And searches out every green thing.

Brave, free, and hardy, uncorrupted by luxury, but restless and rapacious, — such were the Bedouins. The land in which they lived had made them so; for but a small part of it was fit for cultivation, and though the inhabitants differed from each other in their modes of life, some dwelling in open villages and others in tents,[3] in no case could anything like cities be raised. Organized society could not exist where the population was for the most part unsettled; and the dryness of their country, in which one miserable well was considered a valuable possession, and many parts of which became absolutely uninhabitable for the time, if no rain fell, brought the various tribes into constant collision with each other; and want often drove them to make war upon one another, or to plunder the more fortunate regions that lay upon the borders of their desert. They were troublesome neighbors, therefore, and a great curse to the merchants; for they were constantly attacking their caravans, and could not well be subdued themselves on account of the ease with which they escaped on their swift camels and horses, and disappeared with all their possessions, on the approach of a hostile camp, into the heart of the desert, to which their enemies could hardly follow them.

A wild-ass of a man, and every one's enemy! This is surely not an attractive picture, and if it is a faithful likeness we can have no great respect for the people it represents,

[1] Genesis xxv. 1–4. [2] Job xxxix. 5–8.
[3] Genesis xxv. 16, after an amended version.

since they must have stood low in the scale of development. "But," it may be said, "is it fair to throw the blame upon a tribe when the country in which it lived almost compelled it to lead a marauding life? We saw just now that the nature of their country made the Ishmaelites what they were. Was it their fault, then, that they were what their country made them?" Let us not deceive ourselves and each other! The character of a people, like that of an individual, is formed to a great extent by circumstances; but for all that we are not guiltless if we allow ourselves to be drawn into sin by our surroundings. Each one's lot in life brings its special temptations with it, and each one must learn to overcome them. It is just the same with nations. The character of every country brings some temptation with it. A rich and fruitful land has an enervating effect upon its inhabitants, and makes them luxurious, lazy, and licentious; just as a barren land, whose inhabitants have a hard struggle with nature, may easily make them rude, cruel, quarrelsome, restless, and rapacious. But no people must allow itself to be made bad by its climate and its circumstances. It must make itself master of them. It is no use saying that this is impossible; for even if the poverty of a country, for instance, makes its inhabitants impatient, and sets them fighting with each other, yet after all they would overcome the difficulties with which they have to contend more easily, and would experience greater prosperity and enjoy more happiness, if they helped each other and joined together to rescue themselves by courage and perseverance from the dangers with which they are threatened by nature than if they went on making war upon each other. It is only by learning to resist such temptations as these, and to overcome the evil influence of circumstances, that a nation can become a blessing to mankind and a joy to itself.

A barren land and straitened circumstances may even benefit a people if it knows that there are other and better treasures than great flocks or swift horses, if it loves religion and goodness. But, in spiritual things, the Bedouins never excelled. The wants of the moment, the satisfaction of their daily necessities, were the points of chief importance with them. Their old religion, like that of the Israelites, was the worship of stars and stones. But no Moses rose among "the sons of the East" to teach a higher view of the being and the service of the deity. Like so many other peoples, they went on standing where they had always stood, until they gradually

ceased to care for spiritual things at all. From this people "like a wild ass" no light has streamed. It is true that the tribe from which Mohammed, the prophet of the Arabs, sprang boasted its descent from Ishmael, yet it was not among the wandering hordes of the north, but among the inhabitants of those regions in which agriculture and commerce were practised, and even there to a large extent under Israelite influences, that Islam rose.

Chapter XVI.

THE DESTRUCTION OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH.

Gen. XVIII., XIX.

IN the remaining stories about Abram, this patriarch is always called Abraham, and his wife Sarah, not Sarai. The occasion of this change is told us in a story[1] (the principal contents of which we shall speak of in another chapter), in which it is said to have been commanded by God.

What "Abram" means we are not told; but "Abraham," according to this writer, is "the father of a multitude," and the name embodies the prophecy of a numerous posterity; many peoples and kings were to descend from him. The name "Sarah," no translation of which is given, may mean "princess." This change of names is reported not by the oldest writer, but in the "Book of Origins." From this point, however, the compiler of the book of Genesis, who collected the different accounts together, has changed the names of Abram and Sarai into Abraham and Sarah in all the documents; and we shall follow his example.

First, then, we will tell the story of the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah. It runs as follows: —

When Abraham was living by the oak-tree of Mamre, he had repeated proofs of the favor with which he was regarded by Yahweh, the terrible avenger of wrong. Thus he was sitting one day, when the sun was at its hottest, in the door of his tent, when he saw at a little distance before him three men in whom he recognized at once his god Yahweh and two angels. It need not be said that he hastened to meet them,

[1] Genesis xvii.

and, throwing himself upon the ground, addressed the foremost of the three with the words, "Lord! be gracious to me, and pass not by the dwelling of your servant. Let me wash your feet, and do you then lie down under the tree until the meal is ready, that I may set a piece of bread before you, to strengthen you for the rest of your journey. Surely it is for this that you have visited your servant." The guests yielded to his invitation, and Abraham made haste to prepare a meal for them. He had modestly spoken of what he could set before them as "a piece of bread;" but, of course, he gave them the best he had, and a plentiful meal of cakes and meat, with fresh and curdled milk was soon prepared. According to the custom still prevalent in the East, Abraham did not join his illustrious guests at table, but waited on them himself.

After their meal, Yahweh asked where Sarah was; and when Abraham answered that she was in the tent, he declared "within a year I will come again, and then Sarah shall have a son." Sarah, who was in the front part of the tent, laughed to herself, and thought, "I have a son, indeed! Impossible!" But though she was standing behind Yahweh, so that he could not even see the incredulous look upon her face, he knew exactly what she was doing and thinking. "Why is Sarah laughing?" he asked. "Does she think that anything is too wonderful for Yahweh? I tell you again, at the appointed time I shall return, and then Sarah will have a son." Sarah now tried to make out that she had not been laughing, for she was afraid of Yahweh, but he would not allow himself to be deceived, and said again "you did laugh."

Then the three men rose and went towards Sodom, while Abraham made ready to accompany them. He little knew what he was now to hear.

Yahweh had fearful things on hand, and could not refrain from telling Abraham all that was going to happen. Should he conceal from Abraham, the ancestor of so many mighty peoples, Abraham whose fortune would become proverbial among all nations, what he was now about to do? "No!" he thought, "Abraham must know it; for did not I choose him for my friend, that he might teach all his posterity to serve me and to deal justly? For only on these conditions can I fulfil my glorious promises to him. Abraham, then, must be told what is about to happen."

So Yahweh said to Abraham, "There is a rumor of gross wickedness in Sodom and Gomorrah, and I am going to see whether the measure of it is full, that I may know what I

must do!" When Yahweh had thus declared his intention, his two companions went on their way to Sodom, but he himself still staid behind.

Abraham was deeply troubled, and ventured to come forward to plead for the sinful cities. He could not but admit the truth of the accusation. Yes! Sodom and Gomorrah were full of ungodliness; he could not contradict it. But yet. . . . "Lord!" said he, "You will not destroy the righteous together with the ungodly? Perhaps there may be fifty good men in the city, would not you spare it for their sake? Nay! I know it full well, you, the judge of all the earth, will surely do no wrong. You will not suffer the pious to perish with the ungodly." Moved by this entreaty, Yahweh answered, "Well! If there are fifty righteous men in Sodom, I will forgive the whole city for their sake." Abraham might now rejoice in the success of his mediation, but the fear came over him that even yet his intercession might prove fruitless. "See," he reluctantly began, "I have ventured to speak to the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes, and . . . suppose there were just five short of the fifty! Would the city be destroyed for want of them." And Yahweh's answer reassured him, for he said, "If I can find but five and forty good men in the city, I will spare it." This was a great point gained, but still Abraham went on, and asked, "But what if there were only forty?" and when he had received the same answer as before, he began again: "Lord! be not angry! . . . but suppose there were only thirty?" "Even for them will I spare Sodom," was the gracious reply of Yahweh. Encouraged by his clemency, the patriarch put the case that the godless city might contain but twenty pious men, and then even brought the number down to ten, and Yahweh promised him that he would forgive the whole city if he found ten righteous men in it. It was with feelings of relief and hopefulness that Abraham saw Yahweh depart upon his way.

But his hopes were idle. In all Sodom there were not so many as ten men whose sinfulness did not cry to heaven! This soon became apparent to the two angels who had gone to look into the matter. When they reached Sodom they were asked by Lot, who was sitting at the gate of the city, to be his guests. But when at last they yielded to his repeated and pressing request, and accepted his frank invitation, all the inhabitants of the city, "from the oldest to the youngest," collected together, and, in violation of the most

sacred laws of hospitality, threatened the strangers with violence. No further proof was required. The messengers of Yahweh need not go into any closer examination of the affair. Lot was the only righteous man, and Sodom must be destroyed.

Before the angels began the work of destruction, they uttered the words of warning to Lot, "Leave the city, with all your relatives," and added "Make haste, for we are sent by Yahweh to execute his avenging justice." In vain Lot visited his sons-in-law and foretold the destruction of their country to them. They heeded not; and at daybreak the angels urged him to make haste, and said, "Leave them all behind if they will not go with you. Take your wife and your two unmarried daughters and escape, or you will perish with the rest." Lot could hardly make up his mind to leave all his other relatives to their fate, but the angels compelled him to do so, and led him with his family outside the city, for Yahweh had mercy on him.

Once more they urged him to make haste. "Fly," said they, "for your life. Look not back, and rest not in all the valley of Siddim, but fly to the mountain, or you will perish!" Lot was now fully convinced that he must make the utmost speed, and cried, "Ah! my lords! you have been so good to me as to spare my life; now redouble your goodness to me! It may be too late for me to escape to the mountain; destruction will come upon me and I shall die. But this city here is close by, and it is but a little one. Let me find a refuge there!" His prayer was granted. The avenging angels promised that this little city should be spared for his sake, but they urged him to make all the greater speed, for they could do nothing till he was in Zoar. From this prayer of Lot the city took its name of Zoar, that is "little one."

When the sun rose and Lot drew near to Zoar, Yahweh rained brimstone and fire from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and so destroyed not only the cities themselves but the whole valley of Siddim with all its inhabitants. Lot escaped; but his wife was so foolish as to disobey the angels and look behind her, whereupon she was changed in a moment into a pillar of salt.

That morning Abraham stood once more on the spot where he had entreated Yahweh to have mercy on the godless cities, and he soon saw that his intercession had been of no avail. A cloud of smoke, like that of a kiln, rose from the whole country in which Sodom and Gomorrah had stood, and

told him of the dreadful fate that had fallen on these cities and of Yahweh's avenging justice.

Let us make ourselves more closely acquainted with the place to which this story carries us.

In the south-east of Palestine there is a sea, about forty miles long, and, on an average, nine miles broad, which was usually called by the Israelites "the Salt Sea." Its many peculiarities have always excited the greatest interest, and within the last forty years it has more than once been made the subject of scientific investigations. A promontory, of considerable size, runs into it from its south-east coast, but otherwise its oval form is nearly unbroken. It forms a continuation of the valley of the river Jordan, which enters it from the north, but does not leave it again at the south; all the waters of this river, therefore, together with those of the numerous but for the most part inconsiderable streams that enter the sea from the east and west, evaporate from this great basin. It is surrounded on all sides by hills which reach close up to the water on the eastern side, but are separated from it by rather a broad strand on the west. This strand, like the plains to the north and south, is bald and sterile, and every thing on it is covered with a crust of saltpetre. This is the result of the exhalations of the waters of the sea, which are extraordinarily salt. At some seasons of the year, moreover, great quantities of asphalt or bitumen float on the surface of the sea, and give a leaden appearance to the whole sheet of water. At the south-west corner a rock of salt, about five miles long, but not very high, rears itself. It is called "the hill of Sodom," or "the stone of Sodom." Round its edge all kinds of petrified formations of salt appear, sometimes of the grotesquest shape, and after a time they plunge back into the sea, or undergo great changes from the exhalations of the water and the influence of rain and sunshine.

Love of exaggeration has still further increased the gloominess of this scene. It has often been declared that the vapors rising from the water form a heavy pestilential cloud that never passes away, that no living creature can stay near it, that the birds that try to fly across it fall down into it dead, and that its waters are never stirred by the wind. All this is gross exaggeration. The fact that the district is inhabited, though but thinly owing to its barrenness, is sufficient to show that the exhalations of the water are not poisonous. Besides, whole days have been spent upon the sea itself or in journeys

along its coasts by travellers. Nor is it true that storms are unknown there. But it is undeniable that the Salt Sea has a dismal aspect, and it is not without reason that it is called the Dead Sea.

Now the origin of this "Dead Sea" is the subject of our story. The southern portion of the sea, we are told, was once called the valley of Siddim, and was then a fruitful plain. Several towns were built upon it, the best known of which were Sodom and Gomorrah, while others bore the names of Admah, Zeboim, and Bela or Zoar.[1] Several of the Israelite writers,[2] and some other ancient authors, speak of the devastation of this region by earthquakes and subterranean fire. The great quantity of bitumen that is found there, largely composed of petroleum, makes the occurrence of these terrible phenomena quite credible. It seems, therefore, that the tradition of which we are speaking is a true one.

The recollection of such a devastation would not easily be blotted out from this region that had suffered so much at the hands of nature. The gloomy spectacle furnished by the sea, as it lay between its salt-bound shores, was constantly calling the havoc of a by-gone age to mind, and, to those ancient spectators who saw the hand of an avenging deity in all the destructive agencies of nature, it told of wrath and chastisement. Here was food enough for the imagination! That little city Zoar, on the south-east coast, appeared to have been spared through special favor, for the destruction must have swept round it on three sides. What was the reason of this? If we make the inquiry in a scientific spirit we see that the strip of land on which it lay was on a higher level than that of the rest of the plain, so that when the plain became a prey to fire, and the water of the northern part of the sea overflowed into it, this piece of land very naturally remained above water. But in ancient times they never thought of this explanation, and saw a sign of God's favor in the fact that the city had escaped. Grotesque pillars of salt were to be found in abundance by the Hill of Sodom, and imagination often traced the petrified human form in them.

Thus other legends, besides the one we have given, would doubtless spring up among those who lived on the shores of the sea. We have seen already how rumor has exaggerated its dismal nature. About the beginning of our era the people

[1] Genesis xiv. 2. Deuteronomy xxix. 23.

[2] Jeremiah xx. 16; xxiii. 14; xlix. 18; l. 40. Lamentations iv. 6. Zephaniah ii. 9 &c.,

of the neighborhood spoke of thirteen cities that had been destroyed. We will take one more example of this kind of thing!

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, tells us that fruit grows on the shores of the Dead Sea all full of ashes. "They look as if they were fit to eat," he writes, "but if any one takes hold of them with his hand they break up into dust and ashes." The Roman historian, Tacitus, refers to the same thing. The origin of this story of the "apples of Sodom" appears to be found in the fact that a certain kind of fruit really does grow in the neighborhood which becomes soft as it ripens, but which bursts with a clap when squeezed, and leaves nothing but a thin shell and a few fibres in the hand. In the substance of this fruit, the legend saw the ashes of the cities that had perished.

Our writer selected two of these local traditions, and brought them into connection with the patriarch he desired to glorify.

But what an extraordinary idea of his god he had! And what strange contradictions there are in his representations of him! On the one hand, Yahweh is a most exalted being who sees the future and knows all that is in the heart of man, — a god for whom nothing is too wonderful, and who acts as the judge of all the earth; but, on the other hand, this same god is also represented not only as conversing confidentially with Abraham, but even as eating and drinking, with his angels, in the patriarch's tent. These two sets of ideas can hardly be said to harmonize with each other. The only way of explaining this inconsistency is to suppose that the writer, in working up into a single whole certain old legends about Abraham's dealings with Yahweh and the promises he received from this god, together with stories about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, tried to preserve all the features of the old accounts, but, at the same time, involuntarily ascribed to the god, whose actions he was describing, the attributes which he himself believed him to possess.

The later writer of the stories of the patriarchs says that Lot was spared "because God remembered Abraham," [1] but this is not the idea of the ancient legend itself, which was better understood by one of the New Testament writers,[2] who declared Lot to have been a righteous man, rescued because of his piety. No doubt Lot stands far below Abraham in our

[1] Genesis xix. 29. [2] 2 Peter ii. 7, 8.

story, but still he is a man who deserves to find favor in the eyes of Yahweh. He offers the most liberal hospitality to the angels, and when they, in return, warn him of the coming destruction he gives heed to them at once. Not only does he rise far above the godless inhabitants of the place in which he lived, but his readiness to leave all he had contrasts favorably with the unbelief of his sons-in-law. For his sake, therefore, Zoar was spared.

While Lot is the believer who hastens to escape the coming destruction, his wife who looks behind her in her flight, and is therefore changed into a pillar of salt, is also a believer, but only half-hearted in her faith. Why must she not look back? Perhaps the idea that lies at the bottom of this prohibition is the thought, familiar also to heathen antiquity, that the higher powers will not suffer themselves to be watched when at work. But it may be that it contains the idea borrowed from it by the Gospel of Luke[1] that he whose heart still clings to his possessions in the day of God's judgment, so that he cannot unhesitatingly leave everything that he has to save himself, is but half a believer, and will be destroyed with the rest.

The noblest figure in all the scene is that of Abraham, the trusted friend of Yahweh, from whom he will conceal nothing, because the patriarch must teach his offspring to fear him, Abraham the humble, faithful advocate of the unhappy country. It need not be said that the way in which Abraham prays, constantly beating down the demands of the retributive justice of his god, and persuading him to offer more and more favorable terms, cannot be made the model of our prayers, but this is an objection to the writer's idea of God rather than to his account of Abraham's piety. Deep sympathy with the doomed cities is expressed in his bold but humble intercession. It is a noble thing to "say a good word" for others, however wicked they are, and however much we hate their wickedness: for it shows that we love our fellow-men.

It was very natural that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah should pass into a proverbial expression for any terrible disaster among the Israelites; natural, too, that together with the flood, it should become the type of God's severest judgments, in the writings of the early Christians.[2] Nor is this injurious to the religious and moral life if only we clearly understand that when so used it is an emblem of the terrible consequences of sin, and nothing more; but the superstitious view of the phenomena of nature which lies at

[1] Luke xvii. 32. [2] Luke xvii. 28, 29.

the basis of this story, and about which we spoke when treating of the flood, is very hurtful to our inner life.

The volcanic eruptions, the earthquakes, the explosions of the naphtha wells, and the way in which they had changed the country from a fruitful plain to a salt sea with barren shores, — all this spoke to the ancient inhabitants of the district of the punishments of God; and the aspect of the Dead Sea ever reminded them that their god was a consuming fire who could punish them in fearful ways. So if one of our rivers overflowed its banks in spring time, and its waters, tumbling over the fruitful land, converted it into a swamp, and caused incalculable misery to the inhabitants, we might imagine that the sufferers were more sinful than those who lived on the other side, and who were rescued by the very fact of the river having overflowed on the side removed from them. But this is a miserable idea, for it not only makes us slothful in discovering and applying the best means of preventing or avoiding the danger, but it is apt to make those that escape self-satisfied; and in any case produces a fear of God that may indeed lead to a slavish obedience and a cringing submission, but can never be united with a free surrender of the heart to God or genuine love of Him. For love is cast out by fear.

Chapter XVII.

THE SON OF THE PROMISE.

Gen. XXI. 1–21.

ABRAHAM'S faith in the repeated promises of his god was not put to shame by the event. For what both he and Sarah had thought impossible until it was promised to them really happened; his wife at ninety years of age became the mother of a son, and he was called Isaac, that is, *the laugher*. In child-like joy Sarah exclaimed when he was born: "God will make them all laugh at what has happened to me. Every one who hears of it will laugh. Who will go and tell Abraham Sarah gives children suck? For even in his old age have I borne him a son!"

It was not customary in ancient times for a child to be completely weaned till it was about three years old. When

Isaac had reached this age, the event was celebrated by a festal gathering. Then Sarah looked round her with a mother's pride, and her eye fell upon Ishmael, who was happy, playing. He was an eyesore to her. Had he not been treated but now as Abraham's heir and the future chief of the tribe? And yet his mother was nothing but an Egyptian slave! As long as she had had no son herself she had smothered her vexation, and was even glad to have this other child, though only hers by adoption. But now she had a son of her own. The reign of the slave child must come to an end. He was not the son of the promise. Away with him!

Sarah "the princess" went in wrath to her husband. "Drive out this slave and her son," she cried, "for the child of a serf shall never share my son's inheritance!" Abraham was grieved by this violent demand, not so much for Hagar's sake as for Ishmael's, who was, after all, his son. He hesitated, therefore, to comply with Sarah's desires. But in the night his god appeared to him and said: "Let not the request of Sarah trouble you. You need feel no anxiety for your son and his mother. The descendants of Isaac shall indeed be called especially after you, but I will make a mighty people of the posterity of the slave-girl's child as well, because he is your son."

Thus persuaded and urged to compliance, Abraham called Hagar to him in the morning, and told her of this sentence of banishment. He gave her bread and water for the journey through the desert; and she took her child upon her shoulder, and entered the desert of Beersheba.

Poor Hagar! How had she fallen! Ever since Isaac's birth she had seen the arm uplifted that struck her now; but the blow fell none the less heavily for that. In her imagination her son had been the heir, nay even the tribal chief, and now . . . rejected! All the glory of which she had dreamed had vanished! Alone with her child she entered the inhospitable desert — an exile.

She pursued her way until the water was all gone, and then there was nothing left her but to die. What did she care for that? All joy in life had ceased for her, and as for her son, what enjoyment could he ever taste — the disinherited! But yet she could not look on him while he died of thirst. So she laid him under a bush, and threw herself down a bowshot off, so as not to hear his cries. But now her strength and spirit were exhausted too — her mother's heart was so deeply smitten — and she burst into tears.

Consolation was near the mourner. God had compassion on her son, and his angel cried to her: "Hagar! why do you weep? Your son, rejected as he is, is not forgotten by God even here. Raise him up and support him; and despair not of his future lot, for he is the father of a great people."

Thus encouraged, Hagar raised herself; and now that her eyes were cleared by hope, she saw a spring. Life smiled upon her once more for her child's sake. She soon refreshed the fainting Ishmael, and then she pursued her journey.

In the desert of Paran Hagar and her son continued to dwell, and God protected the boy, and he grew up in the hardy life of the desert, and became a skilful archer. His mother took him a wife from Egypt.

So Ishmael, as Abraham's son, was saved and blessed; but, as the son of a slave, he could not be his father's heir, but must yield to the son of the promise.

Is this touching story a legend too? Undoubtedly. This appears not only from the repeated mention of immediate communications from God, in a dream or by the appearance of an angel, which always show that we have the work of imagination or invention before us, but also from the fact that Ishmael, according to the foregoing narratives,[1] must have been seventeen years old three years after Isaac's birth, and was therefore no longer a lad that his mother could carry, as is here supposed.[2]

In many points this story resembles that of Hagar's flight, of which we have spoken already,[3] though they are not both by the same writer. In either case we are placed in the desert of Beersheba, and by a well. The chief point in both stories is the prophecy of Ishmael's future greatness, though he is not to be as great as Isaac. Just as in the other account Hagar is expressly called the Egyptian woman, to signify that the Arabs had mixed themselves with the Egyptians, so it is told us here, with the same object, that Ishmael's mother took him an Egyptian wife. There is one point, however, besides the form, in which they differ from each other; for in this story no mention is made of the wildness of the Bedouins, referred to in the other; the only allusion to the mode of life of the inhabitants of the desert is contained in the statement that Ishmael was celebrated as a skilful bowman. Nor is it said — though people have often seen it there[4] — that Ishmael

[1] Genesis xvii. 24, 25; xxi. 5.
[2] Vv. 14, 15, 18, 20.
[3] Pp. 126–131.
[4] Galatians iv. 29.

had behaved insolently, or had irritated Sarah by mocking or teasing his younger brother; it is simply stated that he laughed or played.[1] The whole story expresses good-will towards Ishmael.

But high above him, in the writer's estimation, stands Isaac, the son of the promise, for whom the slave child has to make room. This is the main idea of the legend. The writer makes Sarah imperious past bearing, and cruel to her slave in the extreme, and Abraham shamefully weak; for who would drive out a woman and her child, helpless and unattended, into the desert? But he does not think about all this. Before his eyes stands nothing but the picture of the son of promise, for whose sake the son of the slave must be expelled. In this he saw the presage of the higher privileges granted to Israel "the chosen people" above the Ishmaelites. Although the people of Yahweh was younger, yet it rose far above the inhabitants of the desert, and advanced towards a more glorious and blessed future.

Centuries after this narrative had been written, one of the greatest of the followers of Jesus, Paul, was thinking it over. Ishmael, the son of the slave, who was expelled by the divine command in order that Isaac, the child of the free woman, might inherit Abraham's blessing, floated before his mind, and it seemed to him as if this old history foreshadowed something similar, which he saw going on in his own days. For the Jews in his time bowed down beneath the yoke of the law, and were therefore like Ishmael, the son of the slave. The Christians, on the other hand, were delivered from the pressure of the law, and so might be considered children of a free mother. Just as Isaac was the child to whom all the promises of God belonged, while Ishmael had to make way for him, so too the Jews must take a lower place than the Christians who received God's greatest blessings.[2]

Is it true that there are such "children of the promise?" Is it true that one man is more richly blessed with spiritual gifts than another — that one people throws another into the shade — that one community rises above another in its religious capabilities? Is it true that the older is sometimes pushed aside by the younger who is more richly gifted than he? All this is true without a doubt. There are men, communities, peoples who are, as it were, chosen by God to play an important part in the world, whose dispositions are nobler than those of others, and who, when under circumstances

[1] Genesis xxi. 9. [2] Galatians iv. 21–31.

favorable to their development, easily surpass those who have shone before them. So was Israel, "the people of religion," pushed aside by Christianity. So did the Greeks and Romans far outstrip the Eastern peoples as Christians. So again did their light pale, in its turn, before that of the Germans when the reformation of the sixteenth century took place. Nay a fresh generation ought always to rise above that which has preceded it. This should be so from the very fact that it learns from the older generation, and, as it were, stands upon its shoulders. But the path by which mankind advances towards its golden age has many windings. It often seems to keep at the same distance from the goal, and sometimes even to lead further away from it, rather than to draw nearer to it. But ever and again there stand up men in whose heart God's voice sounds clearer, who tower above other men in insight, love, and piety, and by their faith give mankind a fresh impulse forward. These are "the children of the promise," for the world is blessed by them, and others must make way for them.

"But in God's dealings there is much that is strange! According to this God seems to be partial!" He does. Did you expect to find it a simple thing to see into all His ways of educating the world?

Chapter XVIII.

THE LAST ORDEAL.

Gen. XXII. 1–19.

ABRAHAM had already given the brightest proof, on many occasions, that he was ready to obey his god in all things. For at his command he had left his fatherland; trusting in his protection, he had wandered all through Canaan; nay, had he not, though it cut him to the heart, cast out his own son Ishmael, at the same high command? But his god was not yet satisfied. He determined to try his servant yet once more, and this last trial should be a hard one.

Once on a time, while Abraham was still at Beersheba, his god appeared to him and cried "Abraham!" "Here am

I, Lord, prepared to serve thee," was the patriarch's ready answer. But how his ears tingled when he heard the command: "Take your son, your only son, your loved one, Isaac; go with him to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I will show you"!

However dreadful this command might sound, it was no unheard-of thing, for Abraham knew that the Canaanites often slew their children and burnt them upon their altars in honor of their deities, for they believed it to be the way to serve these gods and to show their absolute devotion to them. But Abraham had never thought that Yahweh too desired such a sacrifice. And yet the command was plain, and it was not for him to ask the reason. He had only to obey, and obey he would.

So he rose early on a certain day and saddled his ass. Two servants and his son were to go with him. They cut some wood for a sacrifice, and everything was soon in readiness for the journey upon which they were to start. It took them two days to reach the place of their destination. Leaving the mountains of Judah on the left, they journeyed northward, by Hebron and Bethlehem, until at last, on the third day, Abraham saw Mount Zion in the distance. Then he told his slaves to stay behind with the ass. "My son and I," he said, "will go to that mountain to worship our god, and then come back to you." The sacrifice he had to make was harder than words could say, but there was no need that any human eye should watch his agony in making it.

So the last part of the journey was performed on foot. The two went on together, through the valley of the Rephaites, over the low range of hills that parts that plain from the valley of the sons of Hinnom, then down again, — and the dry limestone ridge, the most northern peak of which had been indicated to the obedient friend of God as the place of sacrifice, stood right before them.

The two went on together, the boy bending beneath the weight of the wood that was to consume the sacrifice, the father with the pan of fire and the sacrificial knife.

The two went on together; the father silent and sad at heart. The voice of doubt kept speaking, "Can Yahweh demand such a sacrifice? My son! my only son! It is too much to require." But it was his god who asked it, it was that awful god, that consuming fire! How could he open his mouth against him to complain? Must Yahweh render

an account of what he did? Was he not God, and could he not ask whatever he would? Be still, rebellious heart; for this must be!

The two went on together; the son careless and happy, full of enjoyment of life, full of health and strength, but yet more or less subdued by the character of the landscape, by the solemnity they had come to perform in solitude, and by the gloomy silence of his father. Not that his father's silence surprised him, for Yahweh was a terrible god, a god that must be appeased by bloody sacrifices; the whole aspect of nature round about them, too, was gloomy, and that white mount that rose so steep before them out of the valley looked to him like the dwelling-place of a stern Being.

So the two went up the mount together, till Isaac broke the silence all at once by crying in surprise: "Why, father!" — "What is it, my son?" was Abraham's reply. — "We have the fire and wood," said the boy, "but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" — Poor father! The question pierced like a dagger to his heart. Where was the lamb for the sacrifice? asked the innocent child. What was he to say to him? As long as he could he would conceal from his child the terrible demand of his stern god. Be still, complaining heart! "Our god himself will provide a lamb, my son!" was his mysterious reply.

So the two went on together.

Go on, thou faithful servant! It is a word of truth that thou hast uttered! God will indeed himself provide a lamb. He will not accept the sacrifice that you intend to offer!

When they had reached the top of the mountain Abraham built an altar in the place that had been pointed out to him, arranged the wood upon it, bound his son Isaac and laid him on the pile. But as he stretched out his hand to slay him, the angel of Yahweh cried to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" Even as when his god appeared to him to give that frightful order he had now almost fulfilled, so now the patriarch replied, "Here am I;" and a ray of hope broke through to his soul. Could it be that Yahweh was satisfied by his willingness, and would not have him actually perform the sacrifice?

Aye! Lift up your head, O Abraham, and rejoice. Let that dull glare, through which the soul of a fanatic speaks, depart out of your eye, and let the glow of thankful joy come in its stead! Your God did but try your faith. Listen!

"Lay not your hand upon the lad, nor do him any harm; for now I know that you fear God, and hold not back your only son from me." His son was delivered, as though given him a second time! He was soon unbound, was standing at his father's side, and the two were hanging upon each other's necks. "Praised be Yahweh who has taken the will for the deed!"

There stood the altar! The wood was all in order. The fire was ready burning. The knife was whetted. Well might Isaac ask, "Where is the lamb?" If they had but an animal with them now to sacrifice, how gladly they would offer it. The spot on which they stood was holy ground; Yahweh was present there; what would they not have given for a beast to sacrifice. And, lo! in the background Abraham perceived a ram, with his horns entangled in the brush-wood, as if brought to the place and kept a prisoner there by God himself. So even this last wish was fulfilled. In a moment he had seized the ram and offered it in the place of his son.

As the smoke of the sacrifice rose on high the patriarch bowed down in prayer, and said, "This place must be called Yahweh shall appear!"[1] Then the angel of Yahweh called to him again: "I swear, says Yahweh, that because you have done this thing, and have not spared your son, your only son, that I will bless you and make your offspring countless as the stars of heaven and as the sand upon the sea-shore. Your posterity shall rule over their enemies, and all the peoples of the earth shall bless themselves in the name of your descendants;[2] they shall say: God make us blessed as the tribe of Abraham! All this shall come to pass because you have been obedient."

Then Abraham returned to his servants, and they all went back to Beersheba together.

The remembrance of this event is still preserved in the name of the mountain, "Yahweh will appear."[3] The spot upon which Abraham had shown his readiness was held sacred ever after, and was even considered worthy of supporting the great sanctuary of Israel, the temple, where Yahweh dwelt in darkness, and was honored by the songs of praise and the offerings of his worshippers.

The most various nations of antiquity practised the horrible rite, still found here and there amongst uncivilized

[1] After an amended version. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid.

tribes, of sacrificing human beings, and especially children, in honor of the deities. It is undeniable that this was the case with Israel too, and our story furnishes a contribution to our knowledge of the custom. For though the chief object of the story is evidently to glorify Abraham's unlimited obedience, yet it surely would not have taken this form if the custom of sacrificing children had never been observed. However horrible the subject may be, we must try to discover how the practice came into existence; and it is not very hard to do so.

For whenever any one offered a sacrifice to express his thankfulness, or to make atonement for a sin he had committed, he went upon the idea that this present would be pleasing to the deity, and would dispose him favorably towards the offerer. The idea that the matter of chief importance was the disposition of the heart occurred, indeed, to some few who were in advance of their times, but was, generally speaking, unknown to the ancients. They imagined their god to be like themselves in thinking more of a great than of a small present. He valued an animal more than a sheaf of corn, and a sheep more than a pigeon. He preferred an ox to a sheep, and was better pleased with a man who brought him ten oxen than with another who only brought him one. And on solemn occasions an immense number of animals were accordingly slaughtered and burned. Thus Solomon sacrificed a great number of oxen and sheep at the consecration of the temple.[1] We need not be surprised, therefore, to find people trying to raise the value of their sacrifices by considering not only their number but also their nature, and arguing that since a man is of far more value than an animal the deity must set a higher value on the sacrifice of a human being, a prisoner of war, for example, or a slave, than on that of a number of animals. And so at last it came to their offering up the most precious of all possessions — their own children. Great thankfulness and, above all, a growing sense of guilt must have led them to this terrible extreme.

That this is really the way in which people learned to make such horrible sacrifices appears from these words of the prophet Micah,[2] amongst others: —

> Wherewith shall I come before Yahweh,
> And bow me before the high God?
> Shall I come before him with offerings,
> With bullocks of one year old?

[1] 1 Kings viii. 5. [2] Micah vi. 6, 7.

Will Yahweh be pleased with thousands of rams,
With countless rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my sin,
My own child, to obtain forgiveness?
No! He has shown you, O man, what is good,
And what Yahweh requires of you.
It is to do right, to hold justice dear,
And to walk humbly with your god.

Such words give us a glance into the religious life of the Israelites of the eighth century before Christ. The prophet does indeed reject the sacrifice of a firstborn child, but he does so not because it is something horrible in itself, but simply because, like sacrifices of oxen and of oil, it is insufficient to cover the guilt of man, since Yahweh asks nothing but justice and humility.

While many of the neighbors of the Israelites sacrificed children to their gods, and the custom was indeed followed by many Israelites, and even observed as a part of the Yahweh-worship, our writer preaches on the other hand that Yahweh only demanded the sacrifice of his son from Abraham in order to test his faith, and being satisfied by the patriarch's willingness to make the offering, took care himself that there should be a ram as a substitute for Isaac on the very spot where Abraham gave proof of his obedience.

This spot was the mount of the temple. In retelling the legend I have brought out this point quite clearly, but, as the story stands in Genesis, this information is not given us in so unmistakable a form. Indeed the place of the sacrifice is described so indefinitely that the interpreters are not yet agreed as to its position. The story speaks of "one of the mountains in the land of Moriah" or "one of the mountains of Moriah;" but though Moriah, as a name of the mount of the temple, was in use in the last centuries before Christ yet it only appears in one other passage in all the Old Testament.[1] Everywhere else the mount of the temple is called Zion. Now, since "the hill of Moreh" appears as a place near Shechem,[2] some people have transferred the scene of the sacrifice thither, especially as "the oak tree of Moreh" is mentioned in the stories of Abraham as the sanctuary of Shechem.[3] It is quite possible that some more ancient legend lies at the bottom of our story, according to which Abraham performed at Shechem some action similar to the one here described. But, in the account as we have it, the reference is certainly to the mount of the temple, which is called especially

[1] 2 Chronicles iii. 1. [2] Judges vii. 1. [3] Genesis xii. 6.

the mountain of Yahweh. The writer tries to give an explanation of the name "Moriah," which he translates "appearance of Yahweh." So the writer of the book of Chronicles sees in the same name a reference to Yahweh's appearing to David.[1]

Yahweh — such was the writer's intention in this story — who dwells in the temple and has chosen Mount Moriah as his favorite place of revelation, Yahweh might demand the sacrifice of a first-born, nay of an only son, just as other gods have done. Indeed he does really desire that his worshippers should be willing to make this offering. But he does not insist on the sacrifice being actually performed, for on the mount of the temple he has appointed a beast to take the place of a human child.

The idea that God can ever ask such a sacrifice from us never even comes into our minds; but yet the disposition that revealed itself in that custom, horrible as it seems, inspires every true believer still. We must be ready to give up all things, even what is dearest to us, to God; for we must love him more than friends or relatives, more than our own life; nay, we must hold him dearer than our very children.

Thus if in times of persecution a man urges his own son to endure death rather than be faithless to the truth, he offers his child as a sacrifice.

If a father urges his son to risk his life for his neighbor, when some occasion requires him to do so, while his heart bleeds at the thought of his child's offering himself up and being taken away from him, he is making the sacrifice of Abraham.

God often requires great sacrifices from us. He would have us hold all things cheap for his sake and truth's sake, for the triumph of right and the salvation of mankind; and though he does not always take what we are willing to give, though we may even, as a rule, enjoy much happiness while still fighting for him, yet we must be prepared to accomplish even what is hardest, to sacrifice even what is dearest, if he requires it.

[1] See the passage quoted above, 2 Chronicles iii. 1.

two chapters.

Chapter XIX.

THE PURCHASE OF THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH.

Gen. XXIII.

WHILE Abraham was living at Kirjath-arba (afterwards Hebron), Sarah died at the age of a hundred and twenty-seven. As soon as the days of mourning were over, Abraham requested the chiefs of the Hethites, to whom the country belonged, to grant him an interview. They invited him, therefore, to meet them at the gate of Kirjath-arba, and when he came he addressed them thus: "I dwell amongst you as a stranger, and therefore possess no land; but let me have a tomb amongst you in which to bury my dead." This request was favorably received by the Hethites. "Dear sir," they said, "you dwell amongst us like a prince of God. Bury your dead in the best of our graves: for there is not one of us who would refuse you his." Touched by their kindness, and grateful for their readiness to grant his request, Abraham bowed down before the Hethites; but he did not accept their offer to place the corpse of Sarah in one of their graves, as he wished to have a burying-place of his own. So he said: "If you are so good as to allow me to bury my dead amongst you, then plead my cause with Ephron the son of Zohar to let me have the cave of Machpelah, that lies on his estate, at its proper price, for a family burying-place." Now Ephron himself was sitting there, as an elder, among the rest, and he answered at once, in the hearing of all present, by offering the cave and the land on which it lay as a present to Abraham. But Abraham, turning to him and assuring him that he had rather buy the land, begged him to name its price; upon which Ephron made the courtly answer, "Nay, do but listen! What matters a piece of land, worth no more than some four hundred shekels, between men of substance like ourselves? Bury your dead there!" So Abraham learned the value of the land, and at once weighed out four hundred shekels in the currency, and so became the owner of the cave, together with the land that belonged to it and all the timber that was growing on it.

Then Abraham buried his wife in this cave, which lies in the land of Canaan, to the east of Mamre, that is, Hebron.

1) City 1) Town.

So Abraham bought this piece of land, the cave of Machpelah, from the Hethites, for a family burying-place.

In itself all this is of little interest; but the writer evidently attached the greatest importance to it, for it is almost the only story about the patriarchs that is given with any detail in the "Book of Origins." Generally speaking, the writer of this book gives us but brief indications of the fortunes of the patriarchs; but in the case of this interview between Abraham and the Hethites he paints the scene in the liveliest colors. He describes the position of the cave of Machpelah more than once, and evidently attaches great importance to its purchase by Abraham. We must try to find out why he did so; but, first of all, I may take this opportunity of making one or two remarks upon the customs of the Israelites in mourning for their dead, and the way in which they buried them.

When an Israelite lost any of his nearest relations he mourned for a certain number of days, — never less than seven, and sometimes as many as thirty. Most of this time he spent in the chamber in which the dead body lay, sitting there upon the ground, or among the ashes of the fire-place which was in the middle of the room. Unwashed, unshaven, with dust upon his head and his face covered, he sat down, for the most part fasting, wrapped in a dark garment, usually called "a sack," that had not been cut out or fitted. In former times the Israelites followed the custom, common among most uncivilized peoples in every age, of mutilating their bodies in token of grief; and the practice of shaving a bald place "between the eyes" is especially mentioned. But this is forbidden in the law of Deuteronomy as heathenish.[1]

We know but little of the treatment of the bodies of their dead by the Israelites of early times; for though there are some traces of the custom of embalming the dead — which is known to have existed in Egypt and elsewhere — there are no clear proofs that the practice was generally followed by the Israelites. The corpse, whether more or less protected from decay, or simply wrapped in linen cloths, was carried on a bier to the grave, while hired female mourners went before it with mournful music and cries of woe, and the relations of the deceased followed.

To lie unburied and be devoured by dogs and birds of prey was a frightful idea to the Israelites, for they all thought a

[1] Deuteronomy xiv. 1.

great deal of having a regular funeral, and especially of being laid in the family grave. The practice of burning the dead is but seldom mentioned in Israelite literature, and seems only to have been followed in exceptional cases. As a rule, they committed the bodily remains to the earth. They had a special preference for graves hewn out of a rock: and tombs of this description are still to be found in Palestine in great numbers.

The subject we are considering naturally turns our attention to Hebron, and makes us ask whether any remains of the grave of the patriarchs, of which our legend speaks, are still to be found there.

Tradition still points it out. Hebron is now called el-Khaliel, that is "(the city of) the friend (of God)," by which Abraham is meant, for the Arabians too hold him in high honor. The city lies in a deep, narrow valley, and the hills slope up from it on either side. On the south side of the city, at the foot of the eastern slope, the Haram, that is, the sanctuary, rises above every other building, and in the inmost portion of this sanctuary are the graves of the patriarchs. The Mussulmans, who are the present possessors of Palestine, as you know, allow the Jews to look through a little lattice in the wall, to the left of the principal entrance, into the vault in which the graves are said to be. Many of them avail themselves of this permission, and come to the holy place to weep and pray.

The date of these tombs is unknown, but they existed and were magnificently adorned as early as in the days of Josephus, that is in the first century after Christ. If European scholars could gain admittance to the interior of the sanctuary, with permission to investigate its oldest portions, they might get some light as to the age of the tombs and their immediate surroundings. But every one who is not a Mussulman is strictly forbidden to enter the holy place. It appears, however, from the curious architecture of the most ancient portions of the walls and arches, that the building on the foundations and ruins of which the present modern sanctuary is reared, must have been built many ages ago.

It appears from our legend that even before the exile there was a place at Hebron that passed for the tomb of the patriarchs. At least the easiest explanation of the origin of such a story as the one in question is to suppose that there was some place to which the popular tradition had given this name. Who can say what was the cause of this? It may have grown out of some misunderstanding, or the zealots for the worship

of Yahweh may have given the name to some cave in which heathen rites were practised, to give the affair an orthodox color. All this however is mere guesswork as long as we know so little of the tombs themselves. All we can say is this, that most likely our writer was furnished with an opportunity for composing this story by some spot that passed for the tomb of the patriarchs.

But the most important point we have to inquire into is the great interest felt by the writer of the "Book of Origins" in this purchase of the cave of Machpelah. The importance he attached to it appears from his repeated mention of the cave in other passages as the place in which not only Abraham, but Isaac, Rebekah, Leah, and Jacob were buried. He is never tired of repeating that it was bought by Abraham for money.[1] The same writer also tells us that the piece of land near Shechem, on which Jacob pitched his tent, was bought by that patriarch.[2] We can only think of one reason for his laying so much stress upon these purchases, namely, that he looked upon them more or less as establishing the right of the Israelites to conquer Canaan. If this is so, we have a remarkable example in these stories of the manner in which moral ideas gradually make their way.

The ancient sons of Israel, who conquered Canaan under Joshua's command, certainly troubled their heads very little with the question of what right they had to the country. They had only one right, namely, that of the strongest. Their god Yahweh had given them their land, just as Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, had given them theirs,[3] and just as all other peoples had received their possessions from their special gods. During the centuries that followed the conquest they were more puzzled to understand why there were so many Canaanites left in the country, and why they had not all been rooted out[4] than why their own forefathers had been allowed to slaughter or expel so many thousands of them. When the belief in Yahweh's righteousness began to develop itself among the most advanced Israelites the sins of the Amorites and the other inhabitants of the country were brought forward as the reason for which Yahweh had given them into the hands of the Israelites.[5] But it seems that the author of the "Book

[1] Genesis xxv. 9, 10, xlix. 32, l. 13.
[2] Genesis xxxiii. 19. [3] Judges xi. 24.
[4] Exodus xxiii. 29, 30. Deuteronomy vii. 16. Judges iii. 1, 2, 4.
[5] See p. 122 (Genesis xv. 16). Deuteronomy, ix. 4, &c.

of Origins" felt how little right the immorality of the former possessors could give the Israelites to take their land from them; and that he tried to meet the difficulty in another way.

We have already had an example in a former story of progress in the knowledge of good and evil; for we saw how the oldest writer in Genesis, without feeling that he was disgracing his hero, put a lie into the mouth of Abraham, namely, that Sarah was his sister; while a second writer tried to improve the work of his predecessor by glossing over this untruth.[1] We shall see again from other passages that this oldest writer had no clear notions of honesty or love of truth.

Now, this story from the "Book of Origins" does not point back to any other legend, but it refers to the fact of the conquest. The writer felt that Israel's claim to Canaan was not very well founded, and so tried to find some justification of the conquest of the land. This he found in the purchase of a family grave by Abraham and of a piece of land near Shechem by Jacob. So, according to him, the Israelites did but recover by force of arms what had been unjustly withheld from them. It is true that this was but weak ground upon which to rest their right to the whole of Canaan, but yet it is something that the writer felt the conquest of a country to deserve condemnation unless it could be justified in some way.

The right of the strongest is the oldest, the original right. For a long time there was none higher. Gradually, in the intercourse of individuals, it had to make way for a better right, and the prohibition, "Thou shalt not kill nor steal," came to be reverenced as a divine command. But long after this had been recognized the old right of the strongest remained in force in the dealings of nations with each other.

When one citizen took away anything from another by force or fraud it was called theft; and if any one killed his neighbor he was a murderer. But when the Israelites fell upon their neighbors and robbed them of their land, simply because they wanted it themselves, they called their wars "the wars of Yahweh;" and all ancient peoples acted in the same way. The Jewish priest who wrote the "Book of Origins" at any rate began to see that the right must be upheld in the dealings of nations as well as of individuals.

This fact is now recognized by all the more civilized nations. No people is justified in attacking its neighbors unless they have wronged, plundered, injured, or insulted it. A war of conquest is universally condemned. It may be asked whether

[1] See pp. 111, 112.

such wars are not still waged, whether the right of the strongest is not still reverenced, as a matter of fact. Undoubtedly. But all this is no longer done avowedly. Even the most ambitious prince, however little he cares for the right, will find out some pretext for a war. Let us be thankful for this; for even the fact that evil disguises itself, and no longer dares shamelessly to display itself in its true shape, shows some progress at any rate. It is an involuntary tribute to the right

Chapter XX.

THE FAITHFUL SLAVE.

Gen. XXIV.

ABRAHAM'S days were numbered. He saw that he was not long to outlive his wife, and that he would soon be gathered to his fathers. Now that he could see in Isaac the future ancestor of that posterity, to be called especially after himself, that was to inherit Canaan, he could go in peace. Yahweh had fulfilled his promise. But before he quietly laid down his head to die, he wanted to see his son happily married; for he had learned by his own experience that Yahweh was no more indifferent to the mother than to the father of the tribe, and that the holy people which should inherit the promise must not spring of an ignoble race on the mother's side. No Canaanite blood must flow in its veins.

And so, anxious to the last to labor for the accomplishment of God's promises, he called Eliezer, his chief servant, who had the superintendence of all his affairs and was therefore the appointed guardian of the young chief, and made him swear that he would seek a wife for Isaac from his former country, where his relatives, the tribe of Nahor, still dwelt. In no case must he marry him to a Canaanite wife, yet he must not allow him to return to Mesopotamia himself. The faithful slave was willing to do all that was possible for his master, but urged that perhaps the woman he chose might refuse to follow him. Abraham answered that in that case he would be free from his oath and the curse he had called down upon himself, should he break his promise, would not fall upon him. But the patriarch thought it very unlikely

that his fears would be realized, for Yahweh, the god of heaven, who had brought him out of his fatherland and had promised Canaan to his posterity, would provide for this too. He would send his angel before Eliezer to enable him to find a wife for Isaac.

Thus persuaded, Eliezer took the oath required of him and set out on his journey, taking with him ten camels laden with treasure for the bride. He accomplished his journey prosperously and reached Haran, the city of Nahor, in "the land of the two rivers," safe and sound. Night was beginning to fall as he made his camels kneel down to rest at the well that lay close by the city.

So far all had gone well; but now how was he to find the right wife for Isaac? Was he to ask for the relatives of Abraham, and then demand the richest and most beautiful girl he could find amongst them in marriage for his master? Some such course would have been taken by human intelligence, by the wisdom of the world; but for the pious worshipper of Yahweh there was another way. His god, who had guided him so far, would himself point out to him the wife he had chosen for Isaac. He would trust in him, and ask him for a sign. So he prayed, "O Yahweh, god of my master Abraham, be gracious to my master and grant that I may find her whom he desires! Let me appoint this sign with you. The girls of the city will soon be coming, as I stand by the well, to draw water, and if I ask one of them to give me some water to drink, and she says, 'yes, gladly! and I will draw some for your beasts of burden too' — then let her be the wife you have chosen for Isaac. This will be a proof of your kindness to me."

Yahweh heard the prayer, for the last words were still on Eliezer's lips when lo! the beautiful Rebekah, an unmarried girl, the daughter of Bethuel, the son of Abraham's brother Nahor and of Milcah, came out of the city with her pitcher on her shoulder. She went down to the well, filled her pitcher and came up the steps again. No sooner had she heard the request that the stranger made her, with a heart so full of hope, than she granted it to the full, resting her pitcher on her hand while he quenched his thirst. As soon as he was refreshed she saw the camels and said she would go and draw water for them too, till they had had enough; and suiting the action to the word she emptied her pitcher into the drinking trough, ran down to the well to replenish it, and so went on till the beasts had drunk their fill.

Eliezer followed every movement with his eyes, in speechless amazement and thankfulness. Had Yahweh really come to his aid so fully? Was she the chosen one? Though he had no longer any doubt that this was so, yet he must make assurance still more sure by finding out whether she was unmarried and of Abraham's kindred. Hoping to learn this, he addressed her again; "Tell me, maiden, who you are, and whether we can have a night's lodging in your father's house." Transported with delight he bowed himself to the earth when she answered, "I am Bethuel's daughter. There is plenty of fodder and straw at home, and you are welcome to spend the night with us." The words of thanksgiving welled up in his heart: "Praised be Yahweh, who has directed my steps to the house of my master's brother!"

Then he gave Rebekah a heavy golden nose-ring and two bracelets, and she hastened home to tell them all that had happened. The sight of such handsome presents disposed them all, but especially Rebekah's brother Laban, very favorably towards the stranger. So Laban hurried to the well and found Eliezer with his subordinates and camels still waiting there. Then he said, "O favored of Yahweh! come in with me. Why do you stay without? I have had my dwelling put in order for you, and there is stabling for the camels."

Of course Eliezer had no need of any long deliberation before accepting his hospitality. He was soon in Bethuel's house, the beasts were unloaded and fed, and water was brought in for a foot-bath for the guests. But when the master of the house would have them begin the evening meal Eliezer refused to taste anything before he had unburdened his heart. So he asked them to listen for a moment to what he had to say. When they had promised to do so he made himself known as Abraham's servant, and then enlarged upon the wealth of his master and told them how he had had a son in his old age who would inherit all he had. Then he told them of the oath that Abraham had made him take, and how Yahweh had not only led him prosperously to their home, but had pointed out to him, as clearly as could be, that no other than Rebekah was the destined wife of Isaac. This last circumstance was so conclusive that when Eliezer wound up by asking for an immediate answer to his request for Rebekah's hand, Laban and Bethuel exclaimed, as if with one mouth, "It is the finger of Yahweh! We can urge nothing against it. You may take Rebekah to be the wife of your master's son, as Yahweh has commanded."

On receiving this reply the slave of Abraham fell down upon the earth to give Yahweh thanks. Then he opened all his treasures, rich bridal presents for Rebekah and many costly gifts for her mother and brother — such was the custom of the Israelites — as the price that must be paid for her. Then they took their evening meal.

Next morning Eliezer begged them to let him go home again at once, and even when Rebekah's relatives pressed him most earnestly to put off his return at least for ten days or so, he still insisted upon going back at once. As they could not come to any agreement in the matter, they asked the bride herself to decide between them, and she declared that she was ready to go at once.

Submitting to her decision, the members of Rebekah's family let her go, with her nurse, under the guidance of Eliezer and his men. As she was parting from them they all blessed her with the words, "O our sister! may your descendants be countless in number, and may they possess the cities of their enemies!"

Eliezer's return was as prosperous as his outward journey had been; and sooner than he could have hoped he was able to give Isaac his bride; for though he generally lived by the well Lahai-roi, Isaac had just now come northwards, and was in the neighborhood of Hebron, the so-called "South of Judah." Still sorrowing over his mother's death, he had gone out in the twilight of a certain evening to lament her[1] undisturbed in the open field, when he saw the caravan approaching. He, too, was observed by the others, and Rebekah seemed to have some presentiment that he was her bridegroom, for as soon as she saw him she lighted from her camel. "Who is that coming to meet us?" she asked Eliezer. "It is my master," he replied, and, in accordance with the customs of the land, Rebekah must veil herself at once.

Informed by Eliezer of all that had happened, Isaac took Rebekah into Sarah's tent. She became his wife, and he loved her, and in her love he found comfort for his mother's death.

By all that is told us here we are drawn towards Eliezer, the faithful slave of Abraham, born in his house,[2] the steward of all his possessions, fixed upon as his master's heir until the birth of Isaac. What thoughtfulness we trace in the

[1] After an amended version. [2] Genesis xv. 3.

difficulties he suggests! What tender care he showed in accomplishing the task he had undertaken! What true zeal inspired him, when weary as he was with his journey, he refused to eat anything before he had delivered his message! What diligence he displayed in carrying out his mission! He is the very pattern of an old and faithful servant such as existed in the writer's mind, such as he had probably met in real life too, though hardly in such perfection. We are drawn towards Eliezer too by his earnest piety, none the less genuine because we must admit it to have been coupled with very mistaken ideas.

Yes! the whole idea of Eliezer, or rather of the writer of the story, as to the way in which God helps those he loves is mistaken and superstitious. Abraham expects that the wife whom Eliezer chooses will follow him, because Yahweh will send his angel to show him the way. Apparently Yahweh does so. Then he gives ear to Eliezer when he fixes upon a certain sign by which to know the chosen maid. She is pointed out by Yahweh himself, as her relations see at once.

The belief that such things may happen, and that God sometimes uses outward means of warning men, of showing them their way, of helping or resisting them, — this belief was very common in ancient times. We shall meet with numbers of examples of it in the Bible, and it was long maintained by Christians too; nay, it is even now the faith of thousands. This idea has made people attend to omens, try to discover the meaning of unusual natural phenomena, and attempt to read the future by means of lots and other such contrivances. Thus it has not been unusual for Protestants, even in recent times, to use the Bible as a book from which they can ascertain what is going to happen to them, and which will expressly intimate to them what they are to do or leave undone. They opened a Bible, for instance, and took the first word they happened to see as a sign from God. So-called Bible-almanacs are often used in the same way by people who look at them when in any difficulty to learn from the text of the day what line of conduct to pursue.

Sensible people, however, no longer observe such practices as these; but there are still many remnants amongst us of the belief from which they rose. Thus, certain books of history lay great stress upon deliverances by the sudden rise of a storm, by the death of a dreaded enemy, or other unforeseen events; and they delight to point to them with some such exclamation as "It was the hand of God!" Many a pious

man can tell you of strange circumstances in his own life and in that of his friends, through which they escaped some danger or gained some great happiness in a way of which they had never thought, and which they refer, therefore, to an immediate dispensation of providence. Irreligious people say nothing about "the hand of God," but so-called coincidences and accidental combinations sometimes make them betray a certain remnant of the old belief, that some mysterious power has a hand in their fate, by exclamations such as "But really it is very remarkable!"

This belief is connected with a very defective idea of God's relation to the world, and with a misunderstanding of the natural connection of events and phenomena. It is a mistake to suppose that God gives us any special revelation of his will in these unexpected occurrences. God has given us no mysterious signs, no lots or other such contrivances, to teach us our way through the world. Our reason is the guide he has given us, and he reveals himself in the fact of our learning to use it, and to avoid dangers and promote our happiness by its help, far more than in one or two accidents that turn out in our favor.

In ancient times, however, people did not think so; and we shall see that the most pious Israelites kept "asking the mouth of Yahweh," that is, trying to penetrate the future by some means or other, — by lots, for example, or by the aid of the priests or the prophets, or by dreams. Like all other superstitious ideas, this belief, that God informs us what is about to happen in such ways as these, is very hostile to progress and injurious to our character. For it fills us with dread of a mysterious world that surrounds us, and takes away the clearness of head and freshness of heart that enable us to find our way through life.

Though we cannot but think, then, that the ideas of Abraham's servant about his god and the way in which he helped him were untrue, yet we cannot help looking on him with great affection. In his case, as in that of many other men, especially of ancient times, we must learn to value what is good even when accompanied by much that is imperfect, and especially by superstitious ideas. We must never become attached to the mistakes, but still less must we withhold our admiration from those who make them, if the key-note of their character be true. Eliezer's faith may have been marred by mistaken notions, but at least it was coupled with self-sacrifice and fidelity. His piety is of the true stamp, for it inspires him

with zeal, and makes him forget himself while he watches over his master's interests. He is the type of what a certain Christian of the first century[1] had in mind when he said in exhortation to the slaves of his own time: "Servants! be obedient to your earthly masters in everything; not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but in simplicity of soul, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do it from your heart, as for the Lord, and not for men; knowing that you will receive from the Lord the reward of the inheritance."

Chapter XXI.

ISAAC.

Gen. XXVI.

THE accounts of Isaac are very scanty. The "Book of Origins" passes over him almost in silence, simply mentioning that he was born, that at the age of forty he married Rebekah, that he and his brother Ishmael buried their father Abraham, who died at the age of a hundred and seventy-five, in the cave of Machpelah,[2] that he had two sons, that he lived by the well of Lahai-roi, and that he died there. One of the older writers is certainly rather fuller, but the tameness of all he tells us under this head contrasts remarkably with his detailed accounts of Abraham and Jacob, and convinces us that he dwelt with no particular interest on the fortunes of Isaac.

The name of Isaac, however, is repeatedly explained. It may be translated by "laugher," and this meaning of the word is referred to in several stories. When God foretold the birth of a son to Abraham the patriarch "laughed," upon which, in allusion to this expression of unbelief, God commanded him to call his son Isaac.[3] When Yahweh, reclining with his angels before Abraham's tent, foretold that Sarah should give birth to a son she laughed,[4] and when the promise had been fulfilled, she cried, "God will make them all 'laugh' at such an old mother!"[5] Besides these there are two other

[1] Colossians iii. 22–24.
[2] Genesis xxv. 7–10.
[3] Genesis xvii. 17–19.
[4] Genesis xviii. 12–15.
[5] Genesis xxi. 6.

references to the name of Isaac: for Ishmael is expelled, together with his mother, because he had "laughed"[1] as if no one but Isaac had a right to do so! and King Abimelech discovers from the way in which Isaac "laughs" with Rebekah that she is not his sister but his wife.[2]

Except the account of the danger he ran of being sacrificed by his father, and that of the manner in which he obtained a wife, in both of which he took a very passive share, together with the stories of Esau and Jacob in which he sinks into the background, while his sons take the chief parts, there is but one legend of any extent about Isaac. It runs as follows: —

Once there was a famine in the land, so that Isaac was obliged to leave it. On his way to Egypt, to which he intended to go, he came to the land of Abimelech, king of the Philistines, at Gerar. Here Yahweh appeared to him, forbade him to continue his journey, and commanded him to remain in this country, promising that he would bless him there. Mindful of the promise he once had made, upon oath, to Abraham,[3] he would give the land for an inheritance to his posterity, because his father had been obedient to the law of his god.

In obedience to this command, Isaac remained at Gerar. In fear of his life he imitated the conduct of Abraham in Egypt and declared his wife to be his sister, but as soon as the king had discovered this deception, Isaac saw how unnecessary his precaution had been, for the king forbade his subjects upon pain of death to injure either him or his wife in any way.

An unusually rich harvest, gathered in by Isaac, gave him another proof of the favor of his god, and his wealth continually increased. At last the number of his flocks and his dependants became so great as to excite the envy of the Philistines. They tried to thwart him, therefore, by filling up the wells that Abraham's men had dug in their country, and finally Abimelech himself insisted on Isaac's leaving his territory, as he had become too powerful for him.

The patriarch yielded to his wishes, and pitched his tents in "the valley of Gerar," where his men reopened the former wells of Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up, and gave them their old names again. But when they discovered certain new wells the Philistines, on two occasions, disputed the possession of them. So they called the wells Esek and Sitnah ("violence" and "hate"). They remained in undis-

[1] Genesis xxi. 9. [2] Genesis xxvi. 8. [3] Genesis xv.

turbed possession of a third well, however, and therefore called it Rehoboth, that is "room," because Yahweh had made room for them.

But Isaac left this district too, and chose Beersheba as his home. It seemed to be a holy place, for Yahweh appeared to him there, making himself known as the god of Abraham, and promising to protect him for his father's sake. So Isaac built an altar there in honor of Yahweh. There, too, his dependants once sank a well, and just at this time Abimelech came to visit him, with Ahuzzath, "his friend," that is to say his first minister of state, and Phichol his general. Isaac asked, in some surprise, "What brings you here, — you who drove us out of your country because you hated us?" Upon which Abimelech replied, "We have seen that Yahweh helps you, and are, therefore, desirous of making some agreement with you. Remember, now, that we never injured you, but allowed you to depart in peace; swear, then, that neither will you devise any evil against us, for you are blessed of Yahweh." Isaac, who was of a peace-loving disposition, granted their request, and prepared a banquet for them. On the following day they confirmed their alliance with an oath, after which Abimelech and his followers departed in peace. That same day Isaac's men told him of the well they had found, to which accordingly he gave the name of "Sheba," that is *oath*. So the city that lies close by it is still called Beersheba, or "the well of the oath."

Not without reason has this story been called an echo of the legends of Abraham, for almost every point in the former stories reappears in this. The measure adopted by Isaac at Gerar to escape the danger into which Rebekah's beauty might bring him is twice ascribed to Abraham.[1] And not only is this latter patriarch brought into connection with Abimelech on one of these occasions, but a scene takes place between them[2] almost exactly like the one just described. For Abraham, we are told, when dwelling at Beersheba received a visit once from Abimelech and his general Phichol. The prince desired to make a treaty with him, for he was convinced of God's love towards the patriarch. Abraham consented, but rebuked Abimelech because his dependants had robbed him of a well that was his own, upon which the Philistine excused himself by pleading his ignorance of what had occurred. After this they concluded a treaty. On this occa-

[1] Genesis xii. and xx. [2] Genesis xxi. 22–34.

sion Abraham set apart seven lambs, and when Abimelech asked him why he did so, he said that they were intended for a pledge, by the receipt of which the King of Gerar was to declare that he recognized the well as Abraham's property. So the well was called Beersheba, that is "the well of seven," because the oaths had been taken by it, and in Hebrew the word that means "oath" is derived from the sacred number "seven." When Abimelech was gone Abraham planted a tamarisk at Beersheba and worshipped Yahweh there.

We see at a glance that this story agrees, not only in its main features, but even in details, such as the proper names, with the one given above, in which Isaac is the agent. Indeed this latter story appears to be expressly intended to throw Isaac altogether into the shadow of his father: for all the wells he finds had been already sunk by Abraham, though afterwards stopped up; and even when Yahweh promises to bless him it is always expressly added that he does so for Abraham's sake.

If the accounts of the patriarchs were supposed to be historical, then the scantiness of the information given us about Isaac would require no explanation, for we should only have to say that nothing more had been preserved by tradition, though even then it would be curious that nothing should be said of him that had not been told of Abraham before. But if these accounts are legendary, we ask with greater curiosity, "How is it that the writers take so much more pleasure in telling us of Abraham and Jacob than of Isaac, and that the latter has become such a colorless figure, and, in fact, a mere name?" Though this question cannot be answered with certainty, yet we are not quite in the dark about it.

Remember what has been said already[1] about the origin of the stories of the patriarchs, especially that each of them seems to have belonged to a different district — Jacob to have been the patriarch of the northern tribes, and Abraham that of Judah; and then look for a moment at Isaac's country.

It is evident what country this is. The saga represents him as always living at Beersheba or the neighborhood, at Gerar, or at Lahai-roi, and since it is the exception for him to appear at Hebron,[2] it is probably a simple mistake by which he is represented in one passage[3] as having generally lived there. Let us see what is known of Beersheba.

The city "of the Seven-well" on the southern border of the land of the Israelites was an important place, for it was the

[1] Pp. 103–105. [2] Genesis xxiv. 62. [3] Genesis xxxv. 27.

first resting stage for travellers from Egypt who had crossed the desert and were on their way to Jerusalem by Hebron. When the Israelites had gained possession of this city, they naturally came into frequent contact with strangers there; for to the west of Beersheba lay the land of the Philistines, while to the south and east of its territory lived the Edomites. A sanctuary and a sacred tree stood there. It is not known with certainty under what name the deity was worshipped there; but it is remarkable that in a certain legend, of which we shall speak hereafter, mention is twice made of "the Dread" or "the Terror" of Isaac;[1] and this name agrees very well with the character of all the old Israelite gods, for they were looked upon as stern powers that inspired fear.[2] Isaac is called the ancestor both of Israel and of Edom, and the Temple of the Terror of Beersheba was, doubtless, the common sanctuary of the members of these closely related tribes. There they made their vows before beginning the journey through the wilderness, or brought their thank-offerings when they had accomplished it successfully. There, too, they laid aside their quarrels with the Philistines about wells and pastures, and made their treaties with them.

The Israelites who settled in Beersheba and the neighborhood belonged to the tribe of Simeon,[3] but the district was afterwards considered part of Judah, and the Simeonites altogether disappeared. The misfortunes suffered by this tribe and the causes of its disappearance are unknown, and we must, therefore, be content with the remark that the inhabitants of this region, the worshippers in the sanctuary at Beersheba, who called themselves the sons of Isaac, lost all their influence and power. The natural consequence was that their worship lost in importance, and that Isaac, although admitted into the series of the patriarchs, took a secondary rank and was so completely overshadowed by Abram, the patriarch of the mighty tribe of Judah, that the saga transferred to him all that had originally been connected with the name of Isaac. The expressions "house of Isaac" in place of "house of Jacob" or "house of Israel," and "high places of Isaac" by the side of "sanctuaries of Israel," do still occur,[4] however, and that too in the mouth of Amos — the one prophet who mentions the worship at Beersheba.[5] This prophet lived in the time of Jeroboam II., and we need

[1] Genesis xxxi. 42, 53.
[2] See pp. 17, 123.
[3] 1 Chronicles iv. 28; Joshua xix. 2.
[4] Amos vii. 16, 9.
[5] Amos v. 5, viii. 14.

not be surprised to find him, rather than another, using this name and betraying some knowledge of this ancient worship, for he came from Tekoa, which lies north of Hebron, in that same "South" of which Beersheba was the furthest limit. He must therefore have lived in the midst of these "sons of Isaac." Josiah's reformation probably gave the last blow to the worship at Beersheba, or if it survived this storm, it fell more and more into decay after the fall of Judah, until at last it disappeared.

While, for these reasons, Isaac, as preserved in the tradition, is but a lifeless figure, the pictures of his sons, Esau and Jacob, on the other hand, are sketched in very vivid colors, which give them a look of real individuality, and make them far more interesting than their father.

Chapter XXII.

JACOB OBTAINS THE BIRTHRIGHT AND HIS FATHER'S BLESSING.

Genesis XXV. 19–34, XXVII. 1–45.

BETWEEN the southern end of the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Elana lies a broad, sandy valley called the valley of Arabah, along the east side of which stretches a steep range of hills. This is the range of Seir. Its highest peak, Mount Hor, rears itself to nearly five thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean Sea. On the east these mountains touch the plains of Arabia Deserta. The name Seir may mean "rough," "bristling," and it is usually supposed, therefore, to indicate a mountainous and well-wooded district. Between the masses of rock, of which the mountains are largely composed, lie a number of fruitful valleys, with green pastures and rich plough land, and many spots well suited for the cultivation of the vine; but, on the whole, the country is bare, and the western hills especially are said to be very barren and unfruitful. The air is pure, however, and the heat is tempered by cool winds, so that the climate is very healthy.

This mountainous district was inhabited in early times by the Horites, concerning whom we know little but the names of certain of their tribal chiefs.[1] The name "Horite" is

[1] Genesis xxxvi. 20–30.

often translated "cave-dweller," and though the correctness of this translation is open to doubt, yet the character of the country certainly led its inhabitants to choose dwelling-places which would have made the designation quite appropriate; for the district was full of caves, and not only the tombs, but many dwellings for the living, and even public buildings, were hewn out of the rocks.

Now these Horites had been conquered by a branch of the Terachites; and even before the time of Moses, accordingly, the mountains of Seir were in the hands of the Edomites, whom the old Israelite stories represent as a mingled race of Terachites, Horites, Canaanites, and Ishmaelites; for this is the meaning of the assertion that Esau, who is expressly called the ancestor of the Edomites,[1] was the son of Isaac, and was married to Adah, a Hethite, that is a Canaanite,[2] to Aholibamah, a Horite[3] (who is elsewhere[4] also called a Canaanite), and to Bashemath, an Ishmaelite.[5]

Long before the Israelites had obtained fixed abodes the social life of the Edomite tribes was settled and regular, and consequently while "the sons of Israel" were still divided amongst themselves, and were a prey to the surrounding nations because they had not yet succeeded in rising to any national unity, the inhabitants of Seir, so closely related to them, were already governed by kings.[6] In the language of the legend this is expressed by saying that Esau was older than his twin brother Jacob.

But this was a mystery to the Israelite, for the elder was also the chief. The eldest son succeeded to the rights of his father, and became his heir and successor. The eldest son was chief of his brothers. Was Edom then Israel's superior? Impossible! Jacob, although the younger brother, had obtained the rights of the first-born.

Now, until the time of Saul, the relations between the Edomites and the Israelites were very friendly, and the recollection of their brotherly connection with each other was kept up long afterwards. But as soon as the national unity of Israel was established, the Edomites seem to have grown jealous of the sister nation. At any rate there was war between the two kingdoms from the time of Saul onward. David conquered the Edomites, and after his death they still remained subject to the kings of Judah, until the days of

[1] Genesis xxxvi. 1, 8, 9, 19, 43.
[2] Genesis xxxvi. 2, xxvi. 34.
[3] Genesis xxxvi. 20–25.
[4] Genesis xxvi. 34.
[5] Genesis xxxvi. 3, xxviii. 9.
[6] Genesis xxxvi. 31–43.

Ahaz, but not without making repeated efforts to recover their freedom.

The higher antiquity of the people of Edom and the higher privileges of that of Israel, the greater fruitfulness of Canaan, as compared with the mountains of Seir, the subjection of the Edomites, and the reluctance with which they bore the yoke of their brothers, — all this is referred to in the following legend: —

When Isaac and Rebekah had been married twenty years, their hearts were gladdened by the birth of their twin sons Esau and Jacob, the only children they ever had. The elder, Esau, received this name, which means "the hairy," because his skin was so extraordinarily shaggy that he looked as if he were all wrapped up in a garment of hair. His character agreed very well with his appearance, for when he grew up he delighted in the wild hunter's life or in wandering through the country far and near. But Jacob, whose name means "the deceiver," was a respectable kind of man, and lived in his tent like a shepherd. Isaac was more attached to Esau, for he was very fond of venison, but Jacob was Rebekah's favorite.

One day when Esau came home hungry from the chase, he found Jacob busy with preparations for a meal. Some red-looking lentil porridge that was just ready excited the famished hunter's longing; so he asked for it, somewhat impatiently, and said, "Give me some of that red stuff to drink, for I'm tired!" Seeing that his brother was terribly hungry, Jacob seized the opportunity to demand, as the price of the meal, that Esau should give up his rights as the first-born son to him. His rough brother, longing for the food, said in reply, "I may be dead to-morrow! Why should I trouble myself about my birthright?" But Jacob would not be put off with a careless word like this, and insisted on Esau's solemnly renouncing all his rights as the eldest son upon his oath, which accordingly he did. Then Jacob gave him some bread and the lentil porridge, and he ate and drank and went on his way without a care or a thought!

So lightly did Esau value his right as the first-born son, that he sold it in this way to Jacob! From his exclamation, "That red stuff, that red stuff there!" he got the name of *Edom*, that is "the red."

By this stroke Jacob had secured the birthright for himself; but he was to get the better of his elder brother in yet another

way. For one day, when Isaac had grown old and blind, he called Esau and said to him, "I am old, my son, and know not when I may die; but before I go I would fain give you a father's blessing. So take your bow and arrows and go out into the fields and shoot some game, and when I have eaten it I will bless you in the presence of Yahweh." So Esau went out with a light heart to hunt.

But Rebekah had overheard the conversation, and it disturbed her greatly. For if Isaac did as he intended, there was no longer any chance that her darling Jacob would receive the best portion of the inheritance. She knew what to do, however. She called Jacob without loss of time, and told him to bring a couple of kids and prepare them to set before his father for venison, so that he might receive the blessing himself as if he were Esau. Jacob objected that, since Esau was rough and hairy, and he himself was smooth, he was afraid of being found out by his father, in which case he should stand before him in confusion, and receive a curse instead of a blessing. But his mother removed this scruple by saying, "May the curse fall upon me, my son! Only do as I tell you." So Jacob allowed himself to be persuaded.

The meal was soon ready. Jacob had put on Esau's clothes, and had covered his hands and neck with goat-skin, so that if his father were to feel him, in doubt whether he really had the right man before him, he might not notice the difference between Jacob's smoothness and the roughness of Esau. Thus prepared, he went into his father's tent.

"My father!" "Here am I, my son! who are you?" "I am Esau, your eldest son; I have done as you desired; come, eat of my venison and then bless me." "How soon you have got it ready, my son!" "Yahweh, your god, brought the quarry across my path," was the traitor's answer. "Come near," said the blind man, suspiciously, "and let me feel you, to be sure that you really are Esau." The precautions of Rebekah appeared successful, and Isaac, after passing his fingers over the rough hands of his son as he stood before him, was half convinced, and murmured, "It is Jacob's voice, but the hands are Esau's." Yet once more, however, he inquired, "It is really my son Esau, then?" and when he had been assured again that it was, he suppressed all his doubts, and allowed the meal to be set before him. When he had eaten the meat and drunk the wine he made ready for his solemn task. "Kiss me, my son!" said the blind old man, and as Jacob kissed him, and he perceived the smell of his clothes — the smell of

the hunter's garments — all his doubts and hesitation disappeared, and he broke out in passionate fervor. "My son is fragrant as the field that Yahweh has blessed!" And now the old man's hands are raised, and laid upon the head of his kneeling son. "God," he cries,

"God shall give thee of the dew of heaven,
And of the fatness of earth,
And abundance of corn and wine!
Peoples shall be thy servants,
Nations shall bow before thee!
Be thou thy brothers' ruler,
Let thy mother's sons fall down before thee!
He who curses thee shall be cursed,
He who blesses thee blessed."

Of course Jacob made away with all possible speed, and left Isaac deep in thought. It was some time before the latter was roused from his reflections by a voice that had always been dear to him, but filled him with terror now. "My father!" cried Esau, as he entered the tent full of bright anticipations, "rise up and eat of your son's venison, that you may bless me." "Who are you?" the old man asked. "Your son, your eldest son, Esau!" was the reply; and Isaac, betrayed and horror-struck, grieving for Esau's sake and knowing that his blessing could not be called back, exclaimed, "Who was it then, that was here but now, that brought venison from his hunting, of which I ate before you came? I have blessed him, moreover, and he shall be blessed indeed!" A loud and bitter cry escaped the defrauded Esau — "Bless me, me too, my father." "Alas! your brother has come and has stolen away your blessing, my son!" In scorn and indignation, Esau burst out, "Truly he is well named Jacob 'the deceiver,' for this is the second time he has deceived me, first he took my birthright from me, and now he has stolen my blessing!" and then with more of sadness in his voice he went on, "Father! have you no blessing left for me?" His father, who would so gladly have given him something, but was bound by his own words, answered mournfully, "I have made him your master, and all his brothers have I made his servants, corn and wine have I given him, and what have I left, then, to give you, my son?" Esau burst into tears and could only say, "Have you but this one blessing, father? Oh father! bless me too!"

As the rude hunter sinks sobbing to the ground, his father lays his hand upon his head. He longs from the bottom of his heart to bless him, but he has no power to turn fate aside,

and the words that rise involuntarily to his lips sound more like a curse than a blessing: —

"Bereft[1] of the fatness of earth shall thy home be,
Bereft of the dew of heaven.
A freebooter's life shalt thou lead,
And be subject unto thy brother;
But in restless freedom thou shalt break his yoke
And shake it from off thy neck."

No wonder that Esau hated his brother for what he had done. He plotted vengeance; but, as he loved his father, he determined to wait until after his death and then to destroy his brother. But when Rebekah heard that Esau had declared that this was his intention she called Jacob and said to him: "See, your brother comforts himself for the injury you have done him, by the hope that he may kill you. Fly therefore to my brother Laban, in Haran, and stay there till Esau's wrath has cooled and he has forgotten the whole affair. Why should I lose both my sons at once?"

Before retelling the story, we glanced at its object, and at the way in which the nature of the countries inhabited by the Israelites and the Edomites and the history and mutual relations of the two peoples are as it were reflected in it; and we need, therefore, spend no more time in specially pointing out these matters. There are, however, several points in the story which still call for our attention.

The legend places us in a world full of amazing superstition. Esau, the writer assumes, since he was the eldest, would have been the chief as well, had not Jacob seized his opportunity and succeeded in buying the right of the first-born from him, and so stepping into his privileges. This does not mean that Esau was constantly injuring himself by the carelessness of which he gave proof on this occasion, and that Jacob got on in the world as a natural consequence of the shrewdness of which this was a specimen; nor does it mean that, in consequence of having sold his birthright, Esau was obliged to give up certain privileges, the exercise of which made him Jacob's superior. No, the story means to say that Jacob came into possession of the power and consideration that Yahweh had destined for Isaac's first-born son.

The same remark holds good of his stealing his father's blessing. Unenlightened people still think very seriously of the blessing or curse of others. They are delighted by a hearty good wish, and, still more, appalled by a bitter curse,

[1] After an amended version.

not because the blessing or curse shows their neighbors to be well or ill disposed towards them, and it is pleasanter to receive signs of friendship than proofs of enmity, but because they believe that these blessings and curses exercise some influence upon their lot, and that their prosperity and adversity are, to some extent, dependent upon them. In ancient times this was a general belief.

But of course people did not attach the same weight to every man's words. They declared the favorable or unfavorable predictions of certain individuals to be especially rich in happy or disastrous results. Who these specially powerful individuals were, was a question variously answered according to the various mental attitudes from which it was asked. Those who attached most importance to religion believed the most pious men to have the greatest influence; but others were especially anxious about the words of those whom they considered cleverer than others. It often happened that the boldness with which certain people declared themselves to have power over the forces of nature and the lot of their fellow men, made such an impression on the ignorant multitude that they bowed down before them in terror. Moreover any circumstance that threw any sort of mystery over a man was enough to make people think that he had power over the lot of his fellow men. This belief then in soothsayers, magicians, witches, rain-doctors, and enchanters, which was once very general and has by no means disappeared even now, rises from a want of reflection, from ignorance, and most of all from fear, which is always powerful amongst those whose intellectual life is poorly developed.

It is not surprising that people who held such beliefs thought a great deal of the blessing or the curse of a father. Who would not shudder involuntarily, however innocent he might be, if his father cursed him? In such a case, though the intellect repeated after the Israelite sage, "As a sparrow flies away, as a swallow disappears, so a curse for which there is no cause shall not come,"[1] yet no one would be able to get rid of a very bitter recollection of it, and many a one would be in danger, when some misfortune happened to him, of thinking of this curse as if the two things had some connection with each other. And yet we know very well that such a connection does not really exist, and that no man's words have power to fix our weal or woe. How very differently the ancient Israelites thought upon these matters and how

[1] Proverbs xxvi. 2.

far most of them were from sharing the common sense of the proverb just quoted we may see from the story of Isaac's blessing.

Isaac wishes, before he dies, to bless Esau and to make him lord over all his brothers. If he fulfils this intention Esau will really receive these blessings. So Isaac himself and Esau and Rebekah and Jacob all believe. The last of these disguises himself and receives his father's blessing in his brother's stead; he obtains the promise of a fruitful country and of the rulership. Esau is in despair when he finds out what has happened, and Isaac too is downcast, for his words have decided the future of his sons. He perfectly understands that Jacob came "with deceit" and stole the blessing, but in spite of this the blessing itself does not lose its power. "And now he will be blessed," he declares emphatically. Now it is all very well to try to soften down this most extraordinary and indeed shocking representation by saying that Isaac's mistake was brought about by Yahweh because he desired to make Jacob the superior, and that Isaac, therefore, though he did not know it himself, blessed his sons "through faith;"[1] but nothing is gained by this way of putting it, for it simply brings more clearly to light the amazing imperfections in the conception formed by this writer of his god. For if Yahweh desired to make Jacob chief of the brothers, could he not have done so in spite of Esau's being the elder and of Isaac's having blessed him? Must Jacob deceive his brother twice in order that his god might be able to bless him? Had the words of a man such a powerful influence over Yahweh?

We observed just now that this superstitious set of ideas springs from a low stage of intellectual development; and it may perhaps be affirmed that the story tells quite as much against the writer's morality. For when he represents Jacob as being blessed by Yahweh by means of the birthright he had bought from his brother in an unguarded moment, and the blessing he had stolen from him, we might very well suppose that he saw absolutely nothing wrong in these proceedings. But this would be doing him an injustice. Appearances in this case are misleading.

Let us examine the characters of the two men here portrayed!

We are most attracted by Esau. Not that even he is a very noble figure! The levity with which, to still his hunger,

[1] Hebrews xi. 20.

he sells his rights as the first-born son, with the exclamation, "Who knows how soon I may die!" is a striking type of the lightness with which many a one sacrifices peace of conscience and health of soul to some momentary pleasure or passing enjoyment,[1] and is as much to be condemned as his violent burst of passion against Jacob. But this levity is accompanied by a certain freshness and naturalness. He loves his father, and, for his sake, puts off his vengeance. There is something impressive in his passionate grief when the blessing is stolen from him; for it speaks of something more than mere disappointment at the loss of wealth and honor. Esau is rough, but straightforward; a man of the field, and, though not our ideal, yet more attractive than Jacob, the smooth, cautious, crafty man, who seizes his opportunity of getting hold of the birthright, has but one objection when his mother urges him to deceive his blind old father, namely, that perhaps he may be found out and cursed, and unhesitatingly follows his mother's advice as soon as she declares her readiness to take the curse upon herself! The word used by the writer to describe the character of Jacob[2] is peculiar. I have translated it "respectable." Most of the translations, both ancient and modern, render it "simple," "upright." The word that is used in the original properly means "perfect," "sound," and the writer's meaning in using this word of Jacob is explained by the connection. Esau is called a man of the field, rough, quick, and changeable, but Jacob is a "perfect" man, dwelling in tents. Gentle manners, courtesy in the intercourse of life and culture distinguished the dwellers in tents from the rough, wandering hunters. These are the qualities, then, celebrated in Jacob.

We must not suppose, however, that because the writer placed the respectable Jacob above the ruder Esau he therefore approved of the conduct of the former to his brother and his father. It is only among some few tribes of savages that such ignorance of what is right can be found as to make them think there is nothing wrong in cheating their nearest relatives, and the writer sees well enough that Jacob's conduct can be described by no gentler term than that of cheating; he himself calls it so without reserve.[3] His mistake is in calling ill-gotten goods a blessing of God, and so making his Yahweh a party to Jacob's knaveries; not in having approved of the deception, which he never did.

In the main, then, we agree with the writer in our judg-

[1] Hebrews xii. 16, 17. [2] Genesis xxv. 27. [3] Genesis xxvii. 35, 36.

ment of this dexterous double dealing on the part of Israel's ancestor. But we go further than he does, and should call a man like Jacob anything but "perfect." Cultivation may be worth something, and pleasant manners in society may be preferable to a rough way of speaking and acting, for roughness often causes mischief and is a source of strife. But if an ugly mind lurks behind the urbane exterior, if the pleasing manners throw a veil over scheming treachery, then all the outward cultivation is as nothing. Nay, sometimes it is even worse than nothing, for we are attracted by it in spite of ourselves, and so the deceiver has free play. A rough, straightforward man is at any rate better than a "smooth" individual

Chapter XXIII.

JACOB'S DREAM.

Gen. XXVIII. 10–22.

FEW forms of worship were so universal in ancient times as the homage paid to sacred stones. Amongst uncivilized tribes, or so-called savages, it is to be found almost everywhere to the present day; and among the most various nations, which have long ago struggled out of the state of barbarism, sundry reminiscences of the worship of stones are still preserved. The savage looks upon certain unhewn stones as deities, and worships them accordingly. It is very difficult to make out what his ideas in doing this are, and so too with respect to many other elements of his worship it is very hard to understand what goes on in his mind, just because there is not much that does go on there. He reflects but little or not at all. Involuntarily we look for too much depth in him.

The lowest stage of religion that we can discover is generally called *fetishism*, sometimes *animism*. Its characteristic is the worship of all manner of miscellaneous objects that happen to make an impression on its votaries. Among the collections of these sacred things are found the strangest objects, products both of nature and of art, side by side. The name *fetishism* is not really at all appropriate to this form of worship, since it owes its origin to a mistake. For when the Portuguese voyagers came to certain regions to which but

little civilization or knowledge had penetrated, and to which no Europeans had ever found their way before (such as the countries of the Negroes in Africa for instance), they saw the natives worshipping certain objects, and supposed that they were instruments of Magic. So they called this form of religion after their word *fetisso* which means a *charm*. The name *animism*, derived from the Latin word *anima*, "soul," implies that the savages think of their sacred objects as living and having souls. We shall use the word *fetishism* as the one most generally employed.

Now among sacred objects of this kind, unhewn stones occupy a prominent place; and in the history of the religion of even the most highly civilized peoples, such as the Greeks, Romans, Hindoos, Arabs, and Germans, we find traces of the attachment felt by the masses to their stone-gods, an attachment often so deep that in many cases the reformers who desired to supersede these rude forms of worship by better ones, saw no chance of getting rid of the sacred stones. They tried therefore to find some explanation of the homage paid to them. Among the Romans they made them into boundary stones, raised in honor of Terminus, the god of boundaries. In other places they explained the homage paid them by declaring that they were meteor-stones that had fallen from the sky. In other districts they were made into monuments or altars of the forefathers. When the simple faith in the consecrated stones began to languish, the learned men of the Greeks and Romans, among others, gave all manner of profound interpretations of their sanctity, and taught that these stones were the dwellings of the gods, or petrified sunbeams. But this throws no light upon the real significance they had to the minds of their ancient worshippers. Perhaps the gigantic dimensions and grotesque forms of certain masses of rock gave them the impression of strength and of something mysterious. Then some concourse of events might lead them to believe that a certain stone had exercised a beneficial or injurious influence upon their fate; and imagination, unrestrained by habits of reflection, had thus free play. The belief that all objects were alive, contributed its share towards increasing the reverential awe for anything that had once attracted the attention, and finally the fame of the sanctity of certain stones was preserved and magnified by tradition. However this may be, the worship of stones reappears in all manner of countries. They were honored by sacrifices and were anointed with blood, wine, or oil in sign of reverence.

One of the most celebrated of all sacred stones is the Black Stone, in the Caaba, at Mecca, formerly the common sanctuary of the Arab tribes, and afterwards down to the present day, the temple of Islam. When Mohammed rose, this stone was considered the most sacred thing in the temple; and though the worship offered to it was as little in keeping with his religion as the homage paid to the other idols, yet he did not venture to attack it, and when he had conquered Mecca, though he banished all the other idols from the Caaba, he reverentially kissed this stone. In later times the learned Arabs invented all kinds of wonderful stories about it; such as that it had become so black because of the sins of men; and that the angel Gabriel had brought it to Abraham when he was building the Caaba, and so on. The stone still continued to be the most sacred object of Islam, so that in the year 930 A.D., when an hostile tribe wanted to break the neck of this religion, they could think of nothing better than to steal the black Stone. This plan accordingly was violently carried out, amid the lamentations of the inhabitants of Mecca. But it was no good after all, for now the faithful worshipped the place in the wall where the stone had been imbedded! At last it was bought back again for an enormous sum of money.

Among the ancient Israelites, too, the worship of stones was very general. The reformers among them, prophets and priests of Yahweh, certainly did their best to wipe out the remembrance of the fact, but they were not altogether successful in doing so. In Euhemeristic fashion,[1] they attempted to make the stones which were honored by the people harmless, by finding a place for them in the Yahweh-worship; and many narratives owe their origin to this attempt; but in these stories the original signification of the sacred objects shines through everywhere.

The old stone worship has also left traces behind it in some of the Israelitish proper names; as Elitsur, *i. e.*, "the rock is my god;" Tsurishaddai, "Shaddai, or 'the mighty one,' is my rock;" Tsuriel, "God is my rock;" Pedatsur, "the rock delivers." Yahweh too is frequently called the rock of his worshippers, or the rock of Israel. Now, it is quite true that this is metaphorical; just as Yahweh is often called the mountain, the shield, or the fortress of those that trust in him; but the marked preference shown for the expression "Israel's rock," and the emphasis with which it is used, show that there must have been a special reason for selecting just

[1] See pp. 104–106.

this metaphor so often; and we can find no other than that derived from the ancient worship of blocks of stone. Here is one out of many examples:[1] —

> The Rock, his work is pure,
> For all his ways are right.
> . . . . . .
> The Rock that produced thee thou hast rejected,
> And thou hast forgotten the god that bore thee.
> . . . . . .
> How should one (Israelite) pursue a thousand,
> And two put ten thousand to flight,
> Except their (the enemies') Rock had sold them,
> And Yahweh delivered them up!
> For their Rock is not as our Rock.

In these lines "the Rock" is used in exactly the same sense as the word, *god*. The name generally used to signify the sacred stones, which were found in great numbers by most altars and also standing alone, was *massebah*, a word the literal meaning of which is simply "something which is set up." In the Authorized Version it is translated "an image."[2] The Romans called them "anointed stones" on account of the manner in which they were usually worshipped.

Now Bethel was one of the places at which there was a sacred stone. This city, the name of which signifies "God's house," was, as is well known, of the greatest importance in the religion of Israel, especially after the division of the kingdom; for there Jeroboam raised one of his golden oxen, and since Bethel was situated on the southern boundary of the kingdom, not far from Jerusalem, this sanctuary was the most important of the rivals of the temple of Sion. It was called the king's sanctuary.[3] But although by the setting up of this image of an ox it was consecrated as a temple of Yahweh, the pilgrims who came there were also much given to the worship of a certain stone, which was probably situated within the consecrated area of the temple, while a sacred oak in the neighborhood of the place had also a powerful attraction for them. This oak was called, for some unknown reason, "the oak of weeping." Now the priests and prophets of Yahweh were bent upon rooting out these primeval forms of worship; and on account of the importance of the city, they gave themselves more trouble to do so in this case than in that of similar national sanctuaries in other localities. This is why such repeated mention of the worship of Yahweh at Bethel is made in

[1] Deuteronomy xxxii. 4, 18, 30, 31.
[2] For example in 2 Kings xxiii. 14. Hosea iii. 4. [3] Amos vii. 13.

the legends about the Patriarchs;[1] but it is not certain that the same stone is referred to in every case. The following story amongst others was called into existence by the desire to proclaim the high antiquity of the sanctuary there as a temple of Yahweh, and to make a sacred stone harmless: —

On his journey from Beersheba to Haran Jacob came to the Canaanite city Luz. Near this place he had to spend the night, for the sun went down, so he took a stone, which he found there, laid it under his head and fell asleep. But his sleep was not undisturbed, for in his dream he saw a ladder set upon the ground, the top of which reached to the vault of heaven, and on which angels of God climbed up and down. Meanwhile Yahweh stood by him and said, "I am Yahweh, the god of Abraham and Isaac! The land on which you are now sleeping I will give to you and to your posterity; and your descendants shall be innumerable as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread to all the countries under heaven, so that all men shall bless each other by making mention of you and of your posterity,[2] saying, 'God prosper you as Jacob and his children!' And, as for the season now coming, I will be with you and will protect you everywhere, until I have brought you back again to this land and accomplished all my promises to you."

Full of reverential awe and a certain holy terror Jacob woke, and as he thought of all he had seen and heard, he said in glad surprise: "Truly, Yahweh is here too! I knew not that. What a dreadful place is this! It is no less than a house of God; it is a gate of heaven!" In the morning Jacob took the stone which had served him for a pillow and set it up as a *massebah*, and then anointed it with oil.

He took occasion from this appearance of the deity to call the city, which had hitherto been known as Luz, Bethel, that is "house of god." At the same time he made a vow that if Yahweh protected him on his journey, and provided food and clothing for him, so that he returned in prosperity to his parents' home, he would acknowledge him as his god, and would give him tithes of all his possessions, while the spot on which the anointed stone was raised should be a god's house to him.

Let us be careful in thinking over this story not to water down its contents by ascribing modern notions to Jacob or the writer. To the question "Where is God?" we have

[1] For example, Genesis xii 8, xiii. 4, xxxv. 1 sqq.
[2] After an amended version; see also p. 109.

1) Bethel

been accustomed from childhood to hear the answer "Everywhere," so that it is difficult for us really to enter into the thoughts of men who had no idea of such an answer, but believed that their god was only present in certain places. If we are to understand antiquity, however, we must try to place ourselves at this point of view. In the conception of the Israelite who wrote our narrative, and of all those who surrounded him, Yahweh was confined to a definite place, just like a man. He lived in heaven, and sometimes came from thence to visit the earth. He did not come down to all places alike, however, but only to some few selected spots where he revealed himself in dreams and visions, or in personal intercourse, and where he heard the prayers of the faithful, while the offerings that had been brought there, rose up to him. It is true that Yahweh sometimes sent one of his messengers or angels with those he loved, so that they were under his indirect protection everywhere, but he himself was only to be found in certain places, which were considered sacred on this account, and were often up on hills, but sometimes on lower ground. Any one who would see him, who had a favor to ask of him or an offering to bring him, must seek him at these spots.

This seems to us a very mistaken idea, and we are ready enough to accuse those who cling to it of narrowness. We are quite right in doing so; for the idea that the deity is only present in certain places shows a want of reflection; but it may well be that it was sometimes coupled with a far greater measure of religiousness than is to be met with in those who declare without hesitation that God is everywhere.

For it is not so much the contents of our creed as the way by which we have arrived at our convictions that determines our religiousness; not what we believe, but how or why we believe it. If we declare that God is everywhere, only because we argue it out, as we may easily do, it proves nothing for the earnestness of our spiritual life; with this belief we may still live like heathens. On the other hand, take Jacob — to make the truth apparent in his person — as a type! He has to leave the tent of his father. It goes to his heart to do so, for it is sad to say farewell to those whom we love, and all the little spots to which tender recollections are bound. But the heaviest blow to him is this, that he must wander away from the sacred Beersheba. There Yahweh dwelt. There he had appeared again and again to his grandfather and father. There he had received their offerings and

had blessed them. Nay, had not he himself passed many hours, he could never forget, in the shadow of the sacred tree? Had he not in times of trouble felt the consoling presence of his god? Had he not been terrified by the darkness that surrounded Yahweh, and filled with awe and wonder by the consuming fire? Now he must leave that consecrated spot and wander away through regions where Yahweh was not? How would it go with him on his journey? He would have to pass through deserts, to cross rivers, to brave the fury and the cunning of wild beasts — and all this without Yahweh by to help him! Or would this god, who had been so good to his family, send an angel to accompany him? Yahweh dwelt at Beersheba and by the well Lahai-roi, but yet he dwelt by the oak at Mamre and elsewhere too; might he not have a place of revelation somewhere here? How the wanderer longed to make him an offering! It would be such a comfort to him on his journey! Amid such thoughts he lays himself down in weariness to rest. He does not fear the wild beasts now. Yahweh, he hopes, will send a messenger to protect him. And in his sleep he sees the ladder reared between earth and heaven, he sees Yahweh standing by him, and he hears the promise of protection, and then he wakes and cries out, "Yahweh is here too! This is a house-of-god!"

A faith which springs up in such a way as this is the fruit of religiousness; and this is the way in which the belief in holy places rose. Where the pious saw themselves particularly blessed or where important revelations were vouchsafed to them, where good thoughts rose within them or dangers were averted, there they said, "Our god is working here!" A great deal must often have taken place in the life and soul of a man then before he came to recognize a place as holy; nay, it often needed more reflection than it costs many a one to argue that since, as he has always heard, there is one almighty Being — God, this God is of course everywhere, because if he were not he would not be infinite and almighty.

For us every place is holy in which we have felt by experience that God exists, where we have mourned over our trespasses or have formed good resolutions, where holy thoughts have risen within us or some true consolation has fallen to our lot, where our vocation has become clearer before our eyes and faith in our destiny has been quickened. So we do not believe in our hearts that God is everywhere

until we have found out that we can experience his presence in all places, and can receive his blessing everywhere if our heart is rightly tuned.

Chapter XXIV.

JACOB AND LABAN.

Gen. XXIX.–XXXII. 3.

TWO reasons for the departure of Jacob to Haran are given in Genesis. We have been told already that he went there through fear of Esau's vengeance; but we find another account besides this that differs very widely from it, and is evidently by another writer. It runs as follows:[1]—

When Esau was forty years old he took two Canaanite wives[2] and they vexed the souls of Isaac and Rebekah. Rebekah, therefore, said to her husband, "I am grieved about these Hethite women. If Jacob were to follow Esau's example, and marry a woman of this country, I should wish to die." Acting upon his wife's exhortation, Isaac called Jacob to him, and, after having blessed him, gave him this injunction: "You must not take one of the inhabitants of this country for your wife; but go rather to Padan Aram, to the house of Bethuel, your mother's father, and choose a wife from among your kindred. And God Almighty (El-Shaddai) bless you and give you a numerous posterity, so that many tribes may spring from you! May he lay upon you and your posterity the blessing of Abraham, that you may have possession of the land in which you are a stranger, that he promised him!" Thus Isaac sent Jacob away to Padan Aram to Laban, the son of Bethuel the Aramæan (or Syrian). Now when Esau saw that his father had blessed Jacob, and sent him to Padan Aram to bring a wife thence, and had told him not to marry a Canaanite wife, he was reminded afresh of his parents' strong disapproval of his own marriage with women of the country; so he married a relative, an Ishmaelite woman, as well.

It is easy to see that this story differs considerably from the one related in our last chapter but one. There Esau is the favorite of Isaac, who desires to bless him, and only makes Jacob the head of his brothers by mistake. Here, on

[1] Genesis xxvi. 34, 35, xxvii. 46–xxviii. 9. [2] See p. 167.

the other hand, Isaac thinks just as Rebekah does about Esau. His marriages with Hethite wives are a thorn in the flesh of both, and induce Isaac knowingly and intentionally to call down the blessing of Abraham upon Jacob's head. There Jacob obtains the birthright and his father's blessing in an underhand manner. Here he is the obedient son, who goes to Mesopotamia to seek a wife after the heart of his parents, so as not to forfeit their favor as Esau had done. Now attempts have been made to bring these two stories into agreement with each other, by saying that Rebekah represented to Isaac how desirable it would be for Jacob to marry one of his own kindred, simply in order to gain his consent to the departure of his younger son: but there is not a single word that points to this conclusion; and if it is correct, then surely Isaac is made out a most feeble creature, for he renews, of his own free will and without a word of reproach, the blessing gained in the first instance by a fraud. Nor can we understand how Esau could determine to marry an Ishmaelite wife "because Isaac had blessed Jacob and sent him to Padan Aram to fetch a wife" if the blessing had really been stolen already.

In the account of Jacob's departure from Beersheba to seek a wife among his kindred, we have a portion of the "Book of Origins" before us; and here as elsewhere[1] that work gives but colorless figures to the patriarchs. There were some old legends, on the other hand, that gave Jacob very characteristic features; for his name that was interpreted "deceiver"[2] led the popular tradition to describe him as a crafty man, and in this character he actually appears in one set of the legends concerning him. In others, on the contrary, he is simply sketched as the blessed one of his god, whose help he can never celebrate enough. Here is the story that has grown out of the union of these two sets of legends, in the form in which we now have it: —

After he had received the promises of God's protection at Bethel, Jacob went on to the land of the men of the East. When he reached it he came upon some flocks of sheep and goats pasturing round a well in a plain. Jacob was surprised to see this, for it was before noon, and he wondered why the shepherds did not water their flocks and then drive them further on their way. As he wanted to find out the reason of their conduct, he entered into conversation with them and asked them where they came from. "We are men of Haran"

[1] See pp. 107, 108. [2] Genesis xxvii. 36.

was the reply. Haran! then he had reached his journey's end already! He asked for information about his kindred at once. "Do you know Laban, the son of Nahor?" They said they did, and in answer to further questions Jacob learned that his uncle was doing well, and that they were expecting his daughter Rachel to arrive with her flocks every moment. This brought him back to the point that had first led him to address them, so he asked, "Why are you wasting your time at the well here? For it is too soon to collect the flocks." "We cannot water our flocks," they said, "till we are all here and can unite our strength to roll away the stone that lies over the mouth of the well."

He was still talking with them, when behold Rachel drew near with her father's flocks. No sooner did Jacob see her with the cattle of his mother's brother, than he strode up to the mouth of the well and with the strength of a giant rolled away the stone, and then watered the flocks. Rachel looked on in amazement, which soon made way, however, for joyful surprise, when the stranger came up to her and, greeting her with a kiss and bursting into tears of joy, made himself known as her cousin, the son of Rebekah. She hurried back to her father, who came with all speed to meet Jacob, and when he found him, embraced and brought him home affectionately. Then Jacob had to tell his story, and when it was over Laban cried, "You are my own flesh and blood! Look upon my house as upon that of your father!"

Now, when Jacob had been with Laban a month, helping him to pasture his flocks, his uncle said to him, "See, you are like a brother to me! why should you serve me for nothing? Tell me what your wages shall be." Jacob soon had an answer ready; for he had fallen in love with Rachel, his younger cousin, who was far more beautiful than her sister Leah, whose eyes were dull. He offered, therefore, to serve his uncle seven years for the hand of Rachel. Laban consented. For Jacob the seven years flew past like a few days, for he loved Rachel so, and when they were over he demanded her in marriage, and Laban, like a man of his word, consented. But when the wedding day came he made difficulties about it, and compelled Jacob to marry Leah instead of Rachel, since it was not right, he said, for the younger to be married before the elder sister. To make it right again, however, he proposed that Jacob should marry Rachel as well, and then serve him for seven more years, and to this the disappointed Jacob consented.

But though the precedence had thus been given Leah, Jacob still loved Rachel most. It seemed, however, as if Yahweh had determined to make up for this slight, for while her sister remained childless Leah gave birth to four sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah. Rachel, in her jealousy of Leah, determined to "build up her house by her slave girl," as Sarah had done.[1] So she gave her servant Bilhah to Jacob as a secondary wife; and she had two sons, Dan and Naphtali, of whom Rachel was just as proud as if they had been her own children. But Leah, fearing to be outdone by her sister, determined to adopt the same means of increasing the number of her own sons. So she gave her slave girl Zilpah to Jacob for a wife. Gad and Asher sprang from this union, and when Leah herself had a fifth son, Issachar, and then a sixth, Zebulun, and finally a daughter, Dinah, Rachel was thoroughly defeated. But at last Yahweh thought of her, and she too had a son. This child, for whom she had waited so long, she called Joseph.

When this happiness had befallen Jacob the desire rose in his heart of returning to the land of his birth, and before long he asked Laban's leave to go. But the latter by no means fell in with the plan. He declared at once that Jacob had served him well, and even that Yahweh had evidently blessed him for his sake; and so he pressed him earnestly to stay with him. If he would do so he might name his own terms. Jacob declared that though he was quite aware that while he had had charge of his uncle's flocks they had increased enormously, yet he would be content with but a small reward, one of no significance at all in fact — all the speckled and spotted sheep and goats should be his share. Laban agreed, and as soon as the animals were sorted he separated his flocks so far from those of his son-in-law that it was impossible they should get mixed. But Jacob was too cunning for him. He himself fed the flocks of his uncle, who had a high opinion of his skill as a herdsman. But this skill now enabled Jacob to look after himself. He knew all kinds of tricks for managing that most of the lambs should be born spotted or piebald, and he plied his arts so cleverly that he soon became very very rich, not only in small cattle but in male and female slaves, in camels and in asses.

But a rich man is soon envied, as Jacob now discovered. Laban's sons complained that their father suffered great loss

[1] See p. 126.

by the arrangement he had made. They could not bear the sight of Jacob's prosperity. Their words gradually began to have some effect upon Laban himself, and Jacob soon perceived that his father-in-law was no longer so favorably disposed towards him as he had formerly been. Then Yahweh commanded him to go back to Canaan. So Jacob called Rachel and Leah and put the whole matter before them: "Your father," he said, "is no longer what he was to me. But it is not my fault. The god of my father has helped me, and you know how faithfully I have served your father. But he has not treated me well. He has altered the terms of my service ten times, but God has not allowed him to injure me by it; for if we had agreed that I was to have all the piebald lambs and kids, then all the sheep and goats dropped piebald young; but if on the other hand we had agreed that my wage was to consist of all the speckled ones, then speckled young kept coming into the world. Thus God has given me all your father's wealth. Indeed he foretold as much to me in a dream, in which he said that he would make all the lambs just of the very sort that was to be my share, because your father treated me so badly. Moreover he made himself known to me as the god of Bethel, where I raised that anointed stone." Rachel and Leah thought that their husband was quite right. They declared that they were altogether severed from their father's house and had still more to complain of than Jacob had himself; for they were indignant with their father for having sold them as if they were strangers, and were of opinion that the whole of the wealth that God had taken from their father's property belonged to them and to their sons. They declared, therefore, that they were quite ready to comply with Jacob's wishes.

So once when Laban was at a sheep-shearers' feast, Jacob took the opportunity of making off, taking all his property with him, and at the same time Rachel took her father's household gods (*teraphim*) with her. Jacob set out on the way to Canaan, crossed the Euphrates, directed his course towards the mountains of Gilead, and had just reached them, on the seventh day, when he was overtaken by Laban, who had not heard of his departure till the third day after he had gone. Laban was very angry, especially about the household gods having been stolen, and had no very gentle thoughts as regarded his nephew. So the meeting might have been a very unpleasant one and might even have ended in bloodshed, if God had not helped his favorite and warned Laban not to

do him any kind of harm. As it was, all went off quietly, though Laban reproached Jacob for having slipped away without warning, and declared that if he had known of his intention he would have given him a festal escort. Jacob excused himself by saying that he had been afraid that Laban would not leave his daughters free to accompany him.

But when Laban accused him of having taken away the *teraphim*, he stoutly maintained his innocence, and gave his father-in-law leave to search all the tents, declaring that any one in whose possession the stolen goods were found should be put to death. This was a rash promise; for he ought to have remembered that a great deal might have gone on that he knew nothing about. Rachel, however, who had not told her husband what she had done, managed to escape detection; for she hid the *teraphim* in the pannier that was usually fixed on the camel's back to carry the women, and then went and lay down on it herself, pretending to be ill; and when her father came to search the tent, she begged him not to be offended with her for not rising, as she was unwell. So he could not find what he had lost; and Jacob assumed a tone of injured innocence and said: "Now just see what you have been hunting me down in this way for! What injury have I done you? What have I stolen from you? Have I not always served you faithfully these twenty years — fourteen years for your daughters and six years for your cattle? Have I not looked after your interests at the cost of my own? And all you have done has been to change my wage ten times, so that if the god of Abraham and the Terror of Isaac had not helped me, I should have been a beggar when I left you."

Laban now dropped all hostile intentions and proposed to Jacob that they should make an alliance together. Jacob agreed, and raised a *massebah*. Then the dependants of both of them raised a great heap of stones, by which they took their meal. They called this artificial hill of stones "the heap of the witness," which is "Gilead" in Hebrew. It has given its name to a certain district beyond the Jordan. Then Laban cried, "God bear witness that when we have left each other you are to treat my daughters well, and marry no more wives! Moreover this heap of stones and this *massebah* are witnesses that we will never cross this boundary with hostile intentions towards each other. May the gods of Abraham and of Nahor judge between us!" Then they swore to observe this covenant — Jacob's oath being in the name of the Terror of Isaac. After that Jacob prepared a feast in cele-

bration of the covenant, and next morning each of them went on his way.

When Jacob was pursuing his journey again there came angels of God to meet him, and when he saw them he exclaimed, "It is a camp (*Mahanim*) of God!" So the place is called Mahanaim.

We should certainly have placed but small reliance on this oath of Jacob, and for the best of reasons! How can we rest anything upon the faith of a man who plays such a shameful part as Jacob does in this affair? He cheats his father-in-law, — who is certainly just as bad as he is himself however, — he sees his own possessions constantly increasing and those of Laban diminishing in consequence of all kinds of tricks that he practises, and yet the name of God is ever on his lips, he speaks to his wives of their father's injustice, complains of his want of kindly feeling towards him, and talks about the blessing of God by which he has grown rich. A most repulsive figure! Nay, a depth of immorality that makes us shudder is opened before us, for what is more detestable than for a man to have the name of God in his mouth and faithlessness in his heart.

Not to do the Israelites the injustice of supposing that they saw no harm in such a dishonest way of life, we must bear in mind what I mentioned before beginning to tell the story, namely, that it is put together out of two legends. In the one Jacob becomes rich at Laban's cost by his dishonorable practices, whereas in the other he is represented as an honorable man who is cheated by Laban, first of all on occasion of his marriage, and afterwards by constant changing of his wages; but all this only brings out more and more clearly the faithfulness of his god, who blesses him with children and with wealth, who restrains Laban from injuring him, and whose angels he meets by the Jordan.

The writers of these original stories had of course certain definite objects before them. One of these objects comes very clearly into view. The writer, namely, who gives us such a detailed account of the birth of Jacob's children, adding the explanation of their names — which I have omitted, however, because it can only be understood when we have the Hebrew words from which they are said to be derived before us, — this writer desired to assign its proper rank to each of the tribes of Israel. With the exception of Benjamin, whose birth has not been mentioned yet, the tribe of Joseph, that is

of Ephraim and Manasseh, occupies the first place in his estimation. It is true that Joseph is not the eldest son, that is to say, that other tribes had gained settled abodes and become influential at an earlier period; but he is the son of the dearly loved Rachel; he is the long expected one, after whose birth Jacob desires at once to return to Canaan as if the object of his stay in a foreign land were now accomplished. After the twofold tribe of Joseph came Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun as being of purer Israelite blood than the other tribes. This is why they are called the children of Leah, a wife of the first rank. The tribes on the other hand, that are said to be the children of the slaves, are of less noble blood in the writer's estimation.

Again, these legends teach the lesson that friendly relations ought to subsist between Israel and Aram or Syria; explain the origin of the worship of *teraphim* in Israel; and above all declare emphatically that the Israelites, unlike the Edomites, have no Canaanite blood in their veins, and in this way vehemently oppose matrimonial alliances with the Canaanites, in which many Israelites saw no harm. In later times we shall hear of this disputed point again and again.

The accounts of Jacob's cunning lead us to ask what idea of honor the writer can have had. In speaking of the legends of Abraham we could not help noticing that the feelings of the ancient Israelites on this point were none of the finest;[1] and here we have a further proof of the fact. But we must be careful not to exaggerate. We must not suppose that at the time when this story was composed, that is to say after the division of the kingdom, the Israelites had still so little idea of honesty as not to disapprove of Jacob's conduct towards Esau, Isaac, and Laban. They were not so morally dull as that, or at least the more enlightened amongst them were not. The commandment: thou shalt not steal! had not been a dead letter amongst them. The law-givers settled a penalty for theft, namely that the thief was to restore at least twice as much as he had stolen.[2] The proverb-makers, or sagas, whose object was above everything to promote goodness, condemned both stealing and underhand trickery in the strongest terms. They considered it quite right that a thief should be punished even if it were to satisfy his hunger that he had stolen[3] They were zealous against the use of false weights

[1] Pp. 111, 112. [2] Exodus xxii. 4.
[3] Proverbs vi. 30, 31, after an amended version.

and measures, and called a deceitful pair of scales and a double ephah (a certain measure for dry wares) an abomination in the sight of Yahweh.[1] They uttered warnings against removing boundary stones and thereby appropriating a part of the fields of orphans.[2] The truth that ill-gotten wealth does not thrive, lived in their hearts, and was expressed in their predictions, "Who sows iniquity shall reap adversity;"[3] "A possession that grows too fast at first will not be blessed at last;"[4] "However good stolen bread may taste after a while it turns to sand in the mouth."[5] Nor did liars or men of a double heart[6] find mercy at the hands of Israel's preachers of righteousness, for they mentioned the tongue of deceit among the things that Yahweh hates,[7] and spoke in praise of eyes that look straight before them.[8] It need hardly be said that the prophets of Israel never spared the thief or cheat, but inveighed against dishonesty and underhand proceedings with all their power.[9]

Now the writer of our story no doubt quite agreed with those who were so zealous against all kinds of cheating. He never thought of approving of the conduct of Jacob, according to his own account of him. And yet we can see, from the way in which he tells us about him, that he had no very high standard of honesty; for he evidently took a certain delight in Jacob's cunning. He speaks of the patriarch's tricks with the same kind of pleasure that many of us too feel in hearing of ingenious plots and cleverly executed knaveries. But the one thing that is worst of all, and that really does need some explanation, is that the wealth obtained by Jacob, in consequence of all this cheating, is called a blessing of Yahweh. How is it possible? That a man may grow rich by dishonest means is but too true; but if any one who had done so were to say that he had become possessed of his wealth by the blessing of God, we should consider him a hypocrite. And yet this writer, who represents Jacob as a cheat, and condemns his conduct, acknowledges at the same moment that these knaveries enabled him, by the blessing of his god, to obtain the right of the first-born son, his father's blessing, and the greatest wealth. How is this to be explained? In this story we have one of the results of nature-worship before us. The Israelites saw the hand of their god especially in the

[1] Proverbs xi. 1, xx. 10, 23. [2] Proverbs xv. 25, xxii. 28, xxiii. 10.
[3] Proverbs xxii. 8. [4] Proverbs xx. 21. [5] Proverbs xx. 17.
[6] Proverbs xi. 20. [7] Proverbs vi. 17. [8] Proverbs iv. 25.
[9] Amos viii. 5, for example.

phenomena of nature and in prosperity or adversity; so that riches, honor, health, and a number of children, were regarded as the consequences of the favor of their god; and poverty, sickness, and childlessness were signs of his displeasure. Such a god is not a morally good being, and may do all kinds of things from mere caprice or even from ignoble motives. Is not nature often fickle and capricious? Can we find any reason connected with the demands of the moral law why the lightning should strike one man's house and spare another's? Surely not! A successful man was said by the Israelite to be blessed by God. But suppose a man had become rich by cheating? Well, in that case he was a bad man; but still he was blessed by God. They could not argue otherwise; for a nature-god is not a morally good being. And so it was possible for a man to attribute base actions to his god and yet be religious; to be zealous for his honor and ready to sacrifice himself to him if need were, and yet at the same time to be of a very low moral type.

This was the position of the Israelites, as of all ancient peoples. It is true that from the time of Moses onward the moral requirements of God were placed more and more in the foreground, but they were never very closely connected with religion properly so called; and the Israelites never got quite beyond the imperfect views of nature-worship. Even among Christians there are many who still hold them. We must not think it hypocrisy, then, if a king, who takes violent possession of a part of the territory of his neighbor, calls upon the Lord of hosts as he does so, and appears to see in the victories he has won a proof of God's approbation of what he has done. It is conceivable that he is quite sincere in this. He may be a religious man. But in this case his god is a nature-god and not much more.

It is only when we have learned to see in God above all the perfectly Good, the morally Holy, so as to feel that our consciences are bound by him and that we are dependent on him in all we do or leave undone; it is only then that it becomes impossible for us to tell a lie and yet be zealous for God, or to think that he will send his blessing upon the frauds of men.

Chapter XXV.

JACOB'S RETURN TO THE FATHERLAND.

Gen. XXXII. 3–XXXIII. 20, XXXV.

WHEN Jacob had broken up his camp at Mahanaim, so the account goes on, he began to fear that a meeting with his brother Esau might lead to anything but pleasant consequences. They had so little in common! So he sent an embassy to Mount Seir to inform his brother that he had grown rich with Laban, and now desired his friendship. The messengers soon returned with the news that Esau, at the head of four hundred men, was coming to meet his brother. Terrified by this information, Jacob separated his servants and flocks, with a heavy heart, into two caravans, anxiously thinking as he did so, "Even if Esau attacks and destroys one of them, yet the other may escape!"

When he had completed these precautionary arrangements he prayed, "O Yahweh, god of Abraham and of Isaac! thou who hast commanded me to turn again to the country of my birth, and hast promised that all shall be well with me! I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness thou hast shown thy servant, for I crossed this river Jordan with nothing but the staff I held in my hand, and now I have grown into two companies. O rescue me from the power of my brother Esau! For I fear that with unsparing ferocity he will destroy everything, even the mother that hides her children with her body. O rescue me, for thou hast said to me, 'I will make all well with you, and will multiply your offspring as the sand on the sea-shore.'"

Next morning he took still further precautions. He prepared a rich present of hundreds of sheep, goats, oxen, camels, and asses. Each kind of animal was given separately in charge to several shepherds; they were to be driven, a flock at a time, to meet Esau, and the shepherds were all instructed what to answer when Esau met them and asked whose dependants they were, where they were going, and for whom all these animals were intended. They were to reply, "We are servants of Jacob, who sends this present to Esau, and is following us himself." By this means he hoped to make a favorable impression upon his more powerful and warlike brother, and so to secure a gracious reception at his hands.

When it was night again he sent his wives and children and all his property across the ferry of the river Jabbok, while he himself remained behind alone, and no human eye, therefore, witnessed what now took place. A man came and wrestled with Jacob until break of day, and when he saw that he could not overcome the patriarch he grasped his hip, twisted it out of joint as he wrestled with him, and said, "Let me go, for it is day already!" But Jacob answered, "No! not till you have blessed me!" Then his adversary asked him, "What is your name?" and on being told that it was Jacob he said, "Henceforward you shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel (striver-of-god), for you have striven with god and man and given proof of your might." Still only half content, Jacob said to him, "Tell me what is your name;" this, however, the unknown visitant refused to do, but he pronounced a solemn blessing upon him and disappeared. Then Jacob called the place Penuel, that is *face-of-god*, because he had seen God there face to face, and nevertheless remained alive. Then as he crossed the Jabbok the sun rose. The patriarch limped in consequence of the dislocation of his hip; and that is why the Israelites never eat the hip-sinew of any animal.

When Jacob had reached the further side of the Jabbok, the meeting he so much dreaded must soon take place. In the distance he sees Esau with four hundred warriors drawing near. There is just time to carry out one more measure. The two slave-wives and their children are placed in the front part of the caravan, then comes Leah with her children, and lastly, quite in the rear, the most precious treasure of all, — Rachel with her son Joseph. Jacob himself takes the lead. Then Esau draws near, while his brother falls humbly seven times upon the ground before him. But see! his fear was needless, for Esau hastens to meet him, falls upon his neck and kisses him. The two brothers burst into tears of joy. "Who are these?" asks Esau, glancing at Jacob's wives and their children. "These are the sons with which God has blessed your servant," is Jacob's humble answer. Bilhah and Zilpah draw near with their sons and bow down before the mighty Esau, then Leah with her six, and lastly the most dearly loved of all with her one son. "And for whom is all that army that met me on my way?" asks the Bedouin prince. "It is a present for you," answers Jacob, "that you may be gracious to me." "I have abundance already," replies the lord of Seir, "keep what is your own." But Jacob, to whom his brother's favor is of such vast consequence, presses it upon

him, saying, "Ah no! do me the favor of accepting my present, for I am rejoiced to see your face, that is like the face of a god to me, and you receive me so kindly! Take what I offer you, for God has made me rich."

Esau soon proposed to Jacob that they should stay together; but the shepherd prince, much as he rejoiced to see his brother, did not think this a suitable arrangement, and objected that his caravan included little children, and sheep and cattle still suckling their young, that would die if driven too hard even a single day. He must accommodate himself to the state of his own affairs; which was more than could be expected of Esau. It would be better therefore for the latter to go on to Mount Seir in advance, and he would join him there. Esau's offer to leave part of his escort to protect his brother was also declined; and the two went on their several ways. — Esau to Seir and Jacob to Succoth. Here he built a house and some cattle-sheds, after which he called the place Succoth, that is *sheds*. From Succoth the journey led to Shechem, and — Jacob was once more in Canaan! At Shechem he bought the piece of land on which he had encamped from the inhabitants, and raised an altar there and called it "the god of gods of Israel."[1]

At Shechem he received commandment to go to Bethel, and to raise an altar there to the god who had appeared to him on his outward journey, when he was fleeing from Esau. In order to perform this duty in a becoming way, Jacob first ordered his followers to put away all the foreign gods they worshipped, and to purify themselves by changing their clothes and washing themselves. All these gods and the amulets that the members of his household carried in their ears were buried at the foot of the sacred tree, the "teacher's oak,"[2] at Shechem. Great fear took hold of all the surrounding tribes, so that they let Jacob pass in safety; and when he came to Bethel he raised an altar there, and called it "the god of Bethel," because the deity had formerly appeared to him there.

Here Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died. They buried her to the south of Bethel, under an oak, which was called after this circumstance Allon-bachuth, "the oak of weeping." Hence they travelled southwards, to the region of Ephrath, but before they reached it Rachel had a second son, whose birth cost her her life. The dying mother called her son Ben-oni, "son of anguish," but Jacob called him Benjamin, "son of the right hand," that is to say, "son of fortune," for when a

[1] After an amended version. [2] See p. 110.

wizard stood with his face to the east appearances in the south, which would be to his right, were considered fortunate. An anointed stone was raised at Rachel's grave, and was afterwards known as "the stone of Rachel's grave." Thence they passed on to Migdal-eder, "the tower of the flock," where Jacob pitched his tents.

Thus had the wanderer returned to the land of his birth.

This story does not come from the same hand as the pictures of Jacob deceiving his brother, father, and uncle; nor should we say, from reading it, that Esau had so many good reasons for hating Jacob. The latter is indeed afraid of his brother, looks forward with anxiety to the meeting, and even says that his present "must appease the countenance of Esau,"[1] but neither in his prayer for help nor in what he says to his brother is there a single word about any offence he has committed, nor does Esau appear to think of any for a moment. Now, we have no account from this writer of the occasion of Jacob's departure to Haran; for all he said on the subject seems to have been dropped when the legends were thrown together. We may, indeed, gather from one or two expressions that, even according to his representation, Jacob's fear was not without sufficient grounds, for when God reminded him of his having appeared to him at Luz he said[2] that he had revealed himself to him "when he was fleeing from Esau;" but it by no means follows that Jacob had given him cause to feel bitterly towards him by practising deceits at his expense. The only word that seems to refer to anything of the kind is the one just quoted, namely, that Jacob desired to "appease" Esau; and even this does not prove that Jacob was conscious of having done anything wrong; for the author of Proverbs xvi. 14, for instance, in saying that "the king's wrath is a message of death, and a wise man, therefore, seeks to appease him," does not mean to say that a king is never angry without sufficient reason. As it is uncertain, therefore, whether any account of Jacob's deception preceded this account of the meeting of the brothers, I have not ventured to represent Esau as the pattern of a forgiving disposition, which he would certainly have been, to a great extent, if he had had such good reasons for anger as those mentioned by the other writer. I have only represented Esau then as a powerful and rough, but liberal and generous, Bedouin chief, kindly disposed towards his weaker and more cultivated and prudent brother.

[1] Genesis xxxii. 20. [2] Genesis xxxv. 1, 7.

The materials from which the portion of the legend of Jacob, of which we have now spoken, is formed, are of many kinds. The desire to explain names and usages was evidently a powerful incentive to the author. He gives us derivations of the names Mahanaim, Penuel, Jabbok (an allusion to which is contained in the Hebrew word that means "to wrestle"), Israel, Succoth, Allon-bachuth, and Benjamin; and the significance of the practice of refraining from eating the hip sinew, of the sacred oak, and the consecrated stone at Shechem, of the *massebah* at Bethel, and of Rachel's grave, is pointed out.

Here we have another account of the stone at Bethel. This writer had indeed mentioned that Jacob had a dream at Bethel, but the account of his raising a *massebah*[1] was from the hand of the writer who uses the divine name Yahweh. The great interest felt by the Israelites in this stone, this "god of Bethel," as it is called in so many words[2] in this story, is shown by the fact that both these writers devote their attention to it. Moreover it is mentioned again in the "Book of Origins;" for though the author of that work treated the fortunes of the patriarchs so briefly, he devoted several verses[3] to the remarkable stone at Bethel and to the origin of the name of the place. He tells us that God appeared to Jacob after his return from Padan Aram, blessed him, altered his name from Jacob to Israel, and foretold that there should be kings amongst his descendants, and that they should have possession of Canaan. After this appearance of God, Jacob gave the Canaanite city Luz the name of Bethel, "house-of-god," and anointed a sacred stone there.

A word must be said about the account of Rachel's grave. It is said, by way of fixing the spot, that she died after they had left Bethel and were still some distance from Ephrath, and that Jacob having buried her on the spot, went on and came to Migdal-eder.[4] Now to the name "Ephrath" an explanatory note "that is Bethlehem" is added, both here and in a later passage where Rachel's grave is mentioned.[5] Rachel's grave accordingly may be found marked on the maps near Bethlehem. On our map, however, it has a note of interrogation placed after it there,[6] because this addition, "Ephrath is Bethlehem" is perhaps a mistake. The district

[1] See chapter xxiii. [2] Genesis xxxv. 7.
[3] Genesis xxxv. 6 (first part), 9–15.
[4] Genesis xxxv. 16–21. [5] Genesis xlviii. 7.
[6] See map iv. Jerusalem and its neighborhood.

of Ephratà lay in the territory of Benjamin, a little to the south of Bethel, north therefore of Jerusalem, as is indicated indeed in the story itself.

The point that excites our attention most in the account of Jacob's return, is his wrestling with God. To us there is something so extraordinary and even shocking, alike to head and heart, in the representation of a man wrestling bodily with God, that we can hardly imagine how thoughtful and religious men could ever have related such a story. Yet this is clearly what is meant; for though the Being with whom Jacob has been wrestling gives him no answer when he asks his name, yet the fact that he is a divine being comes out clearly enough in the explanation of the name Israel, "You have striven with God (or with gods) and men," and also in Jacob's exclamation when he calls the place Penuel "face-of-god," namely "I have seen God face to face and am yet living." So too the legend is understood by the prophet Hosea, when he mentions, in allusion to it, Jacob's wrestling with God or with an angel.[1] We see moreover that it is no symbolical wrestling, — no continuous entreaty, for instance, — but a veritable bodily conflict that is intended, from the trait of the dislocation of Jacob's hip, from which the custom of never eating the hip-sinew is explained. The real origin of this custom, which is only referred to here and in a single passage in the Talmud, is quite unknown.

We cannot help asking how in the world people got hold of such ideas. To find a proper answer to this question, we must remember in the first place that we are now in the region of polytheism (belief in many gods). The belief that there is one only God is entirely wanting in the old Israelite legends. We have often noticed this fact already, and the name of the anointed stone at Shechem — "the god of gods of Israel" — is a fresh proof of it. Even if we translate the expression here used, "El is the god of Israel," which it may also mean, it makes no real difference; for if a man can speak of "a god of Israel" or "a god of Bethel," he does not recognize the unity of God. It stands to reason that if a man believes in the existence of a number of gods, the interval between gods and men is far smaller and the intercourse between the two far more familiar in his conception than if the name "God" make him think of one single, infinite, perfect Being.

Stories of struggles between gods and men, in which the

[1] Hosea xii. 4, 5.

immortals sometimes come off second best, are to be found amongst the most different nations. Thus, we are told in Homer's "Iliad" that the Greek hero Diomede, who was protected in the fight with the Trojans by the goddess Athene, at her instigation wounded the goddess Aphrodite (who was hastening to the help of her son Æneas), with his lance. The god Apollo, however — though the bold warrior did not shrink from even him — compelled him at last to retreat: but when the fierce and warlike god Ares mingled in the fight, Diomede was not only protected by Athene from the lance hurled at him by this god, but was even enabled by her help to wound him so severely that he went back, with a frightful shriek, to heaven again! So, too, among the Hindoos it was the duty of kings to take the field with club and bow against the supernatural powers of evil; and in their heroic poems and dramas, the scenes in which the princes attack these spirits are vividly put before us. In the same way, too, according to the myths of our forefathers and the peoples related to them, not only do the gods often fight with each other, but the god Thor in particular is frequently challenged to fight by the giants, and the heroes again and again defy these superhuman powers.

We will select one example from the Norman sagas.

There was once a king called Heidrek, who was at enmity with Gestr the blind, because the latter, who was very unrighteous, would not pay him tribute. Once on a time Gestr, as he thought, came to see him, but in reality it was no other than the god Odin himself, who had taken the blind man's shape. The king promised to let him off the debt if he could beat him at riddles. Gestr accepted the offer, and asked Heidrek one-and-thirty riddles, all of which, however, were answered by the prince, till at last his blind guest asked him what it was that Odin whispered in the ear of the god Balder when he lay dead upon the funeral pile. On this Heidrek recognized the god; but far from showing him any reverence, he called him a wicked devil and a dragon, and drew his sword upon him. Odin changed himself into a falcon, but the feathers of his tail were cut short by the stroke of Heidrek's sword. That is why the falcon still has a stumpy tail. Odin flew away with threats of vengeance.

Clearly to understand how it was possible for stories of conflicts between gods and men to spring up, we must form a vivid conception of the origin of these gods themselves. They are the powers of nature. Man had often to yield to

these powers; and when he worshipped them, therefore, he did so in fear and under a sense of dependence; but he often defied them too, and must not always yield to them.

A good example of the conflict between man and the powers of nature may be found in Longfellow's poem of "Hiawatha." It is founded upon the traditions of the North American Indians: —

Kabibonokka, the fierce north wind, dwells among the icebergs and perpetual snowdrifts in the land of "Wabasso," the white rabbit.

> Once the fierce Kabibonokka
> Issued from his lodge of snowdrifts,
> From his home among the icebergs,
> And his hair, with snow besprinkled,
> Streamed behind him like a river,
> Like a black and wintry river,
> As he howled and hurried southward,
> Over frozen lakes and moorlands.

Here he finds Shingebis, the diver, lingering in the cold regions, whence all his tribe, and even the heron and the wild goose, have long departed.

> Cried the fierce Kabibonokka,
> 'Who is this that dares to brave me?
> . . . . .
> I will go into his wigwam,
> I will put his smouldering fire out!"
> And at night Kabibonokka
> To the lodge came wild and wailing,
> Heaped the snow in drifts about it,
> Shouted down into the smoke flue,
> Shook the lodge poles in his fury,
> Flapped the curtain of the doorway.

But Shingebis has plenty of fuel and plenty of food, and only laughs at Kabibonokka. Even when the latter comes in to him, though he feels his icy breath, he only gives the log a turn, and sings and laughs as before, till Kabibonokka can bear it no longer, and rushes out into the cold again, and, stamping on the frozen lakes, freezes them yet harder, and challenges Shingebis to come out and wrestle with him naked upon the ice. Shingebis accepts the challenge, and Kabibonokka wrestles all night with the bold diver.

> Till his [Kabibonokka's] panting breath grew fainter,
> Till his frozen grasp grew feebler,
> Till he reeled and staggered backward,
> And retreated, baffled, beaten,
> To the kingdom of Wabasso,
> To the land of the White Rabbit,
> Hearing still the gusty laughter,
> Hearing Shingebis, the diver,
> Singing "O Kabibonokka,
> You are but my fellow mortal!"

So in the celebrated poem of the Swedish Tegnèr, the Frithiof's saga, the hero Frithiof kills Ham, the winter wind, and Hejd, the hailstorm, with his spears.

What we now consider a poetical mode of speaking was literally true to the ancients. With spear, club, arrow, or sword the heroes fought against the hostile powers of nature, against the gods. The Israelite, too, when he had to brave the violence of storm and lightning, of the scorching east wind, or of a water-spout, recognized in these phenomena gods who desired his destruction. His highly wrought imagination, the fruit of fear and ignorance, taught him actually to see these beings rushing wildly about him. If he was killed by the lightning, people said he was overcome by the deity; but if he escaped the danger by his intrepidity then he had triumphed over the god; and even if he had been wounded he could still boast of having won the victory, for though the mighty god had wounded him, yet he had been unable to kill him. So too a stroke or a fit of epilepsy was supposed to be an attack by some god, and even an accident, such as being struck by the fall of a tree or stone, or anything else, was believed to have been designed by some deity who was intent on taking the life of the individual in question. If he escaped uninjured therefore, or only wounded, he had parried the onset of the god.

These ideas gave rise to the stories of conflicts between gods and men; for the poets worked out the mythological expressions until they had made them into legends. The story of Jacob's wrestling was naturally suggested to the writer who recounts it by the name Israel, which he desired to ascribe to the patriarch of whom he was speaking, as the ancestor of the people of Israel, and which he interpreted, quite incorrectly however, as "warrior-of-god."

Of all these legends, as we saw just now, the "Book of Origins" has nothing but the mention of the stone at Bethel. It does not even tell us that while Jacob was away Esau moved to Seir. It simply gives the names of Jacob's twelve sons and tells us[1] that when he came back from Padan Aram he returned to his father Isaac again, and, not long after, the latter died at the age of a hundred and eighty, and was buried by his two sons. They lived together like brothers, until their possessions became so numerous that they could

[1] Genesis xxxv. 23–29, xxxvi. 6–8.

no longer stay together. Then they parted, as Abram and Lot had done before them, and Esau settled in Mount Seir.

In another connection we shall speak of a saga that is told us in connection with Jacob's stay at Shechem,[1] but which could not be understood at present without a longer digression than our readers would find pleasant.

Chapter XXVI.

JOSEPH, THE FAVORED OF YAHWEH.

Gen. XXXVII., XXXIX.–XLI.

FROM this point in the patriarchal narratives Jacob steps into the background, and Joseph becomes the chief character, and his greatness the favorite theme. We shall divide the stories about him into three sets. First we shall see how the blessing of his god was always upon him, then how he became a mighty ruler and lord even over his own relatives, and finally how he protected them.

Israel's son Joseph, a lad of seventeen, served his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, as a shepherd,[2] and as he always told their father when they did anything wrong he was thoroughly hated by them. Israel loved Joseph more than his other sons, because he was born to him in his old age; and he clothed him in a regal robe. But this preference of Joseph by his father roused the envy of his brothers so strongly that they could not speak a friendly word to him. Matters became still worse when Joseph told them once a dream that he had had. "I dreamed," said he, "that we were all binding sheaves in the field together, and all at once my sheaf stood up on end and stayed upright, and all your sheaves came round it and fell down before it." "Oh, indeed!" sneered his brothers, "so you're to be our king and to rule over us, are you?" If all this increased their hatred, it became more bitter yet when something of the same kind happened again, and Joseph told them that he had had another dream, and that this time it was the sun, the moon, and the eleven

[1] Genesis xxxiv. [2] After an amended version.

stars that bowed down before him. Even his father, however much disposed to find everything that was good in his best beloved son, rebuked him now, and said to him, "What! shall I and your mother and your brothers — shall we come to do homage to you?" But while the only effect of these events upon Joseph's brothers was to increase their hatred towards him, his father thought a great deal of them, and pondered over them deeply. And he had good reason! For these dreams were sent by Yahweh to announce the future greatness of Jacob's son, and this repetition of the same idea under various forms was a most emphatic prediction.

For the present, however, there did not seem much chance of the dream being fulfilled; and Joseph soon had a very substantial proof of the hatred of his brothers. For once upon a time they were pasturing the cattle near Shechem, and Joseph was sent by Jacob to ask after their welfare and that of the cattle. In obedience to his father's commands, Joseph went to look for them. On his way he understood from a man whom he met at Shechem that they had gone on to Dothan. So he followed them there. Now when they saw him in the distance they conceived the thought of murdering him. "There's our dreamer coming!" said they. "Let us kill him and throw his body down a well, and say that he has been torn to pieces by a wild beast. Then we shall see what comes of all his dreams!" But one of them, Reuben, who, as the eldest brother, felt his responsibility more than the rest, sprang into the breach. He did not venture, however, to declare outright that he disapproved of the plan altogether, so he had recourse to a stratagem to rescue his brother. "We had better not murder him with our own hands," said he. "We can throw him down this well here in the wilderness, and then he will die without our having killed him." This suggestion was adopted, so when Joseph came up to them they dragged him out of his splendid robe and threw him down a dry well, where he would die of hunger and thirst.

Delighted to have satisfied their vengeance, Joseph's brothers had just sat down to their meal, when they saw a caravan drawing near. It consisted of some Arab merchants, Midianites or Ishmaelites, who were on their way to Egypt with balsam and spices. As soon as he saw them coming Judah cried out "Really, brothers! what is the use of our killing Joseph. Remember he is our own brother after all. Suppose we sell him to these Ishmaelites." The idea was taken up by the rest, and Joseph was soon sold to the merchants for twenty

shekels of silver (twenty-five shillings) — the usual price of a slave.[1] This threw Reuben out of his calculations, and when he came to the well to rescue Joseph and found that he was no longer there he ran in terror to the others and cried out, "The lad is gone! Where shall I hide myself now?" To conceal what they had done Joseph's brothers killed a goat, dipped his splendid coat in its blood and sent it on to their father, while they themselves soon followed, and, pretending to be much horrified, said to him, "We have found this coat. Is it not Joseph's?" Jacob recognized it, and cried out in dismay, "My son's garment! A wild beast has devoured him! Joseph is torn to pieces!" For many days the father sat down in mourning, while his sons and daughters stood round him to console him. But he would not accept any comfort, and kept repeating, "I shall go down mourning to my son to the world below!" Thus was Joseph bewailed by his father.

Meanwhile the merchants had taken him to Egypt and sold him as a slave to Potiphar, the captain of the royal lifeguard, But even in the strange country Yahweh did not forsake him, and everything he took in hand turned out so successful that Potiphar, who saw more and more clearly how this Hebrew slave was helped and blessed by his god, gradually intrusted more and more to his care, until at last everything was under his control. Nothing could have been more to Potiphar's advantage. Yahweh blessed him for Joseph's sake. The harvest was a specially good one. The cattle had numbers of young, and were sleek and healthy. The yield of wool and milk was wonderful. The household slaves did their work faithfully. Spinning and weaving were more industriously performed than ever before. The food was beautifully prepared. It seemed as if the handmills themselves had never ground so well before. In a word there was not one single cause for dissatisfaction; and the master of the house had no occasion to look after anything, for Joseph saw to it all. Thus he proved himself to the fullest extent worthy of his master's confidence.

Moreover, he showed himself deserving of this confidence in other respects as well, by resisting a sore temptation. For Potiphar's wife let her eye fall upon the powerful and comely slave, and endeavored to persuade him to commit adultery with her. Glowing with holy indignation, Joseph answered her in proud and earnest language. "My master," he said,

[1] Leviticus xxvii. 5.

"has intrusted all to me. I am next in rank to himself, and am acquainted with all his affairs. You only must be sacred and inviolable to me, for you are his wife. How should I do such great wickedness, then, and sin against God!" It was of no avail. She would not desist. Day after day Joseph had to reject her vile requests, until at last, thwarted and embittered as she was, she accused him to Potiphar of having attempted to seduce her; and he, believing the accusations of his wife, threw him into prison.

Thus Joseph was once more the victim of others' wickedness. First the son of the shepherd prince had become a slave, and now the trusted and honored servant was doomed to imprisonment. But even there his god did not forget him. The prisoner soon won the jailer's confidence. Just as it had been in Potiphar's house, so was it here. Everything that was intrusted to Joseph went on well, so that he was allowed to go about and look after the other prisoners in comparative freedom. Everything that he looked to was looked to well.

When he had been in prison some time a conspiracy was discovered against the king, and the chief butler and the chief baker were thrown into close confinement on suspicion of having attempted to poison Pharaoh. Joseph had charge of them, as he had of the other prisoners, and when he came to them one morning he noticed that they were much disturbed by something, and so asked them, "What ails you? I can see by your faces that something is troubling you." "We have both of us been dreaming," was the reply, "and we cannot tell what our dreams mean, or who can interpret them for us." "Let me hear them," said Joseph, "God can interpret dreams. Only tell me them." Then the butler told his dream. He had found himself standing by a vine-tree with three branches. He had seen it spring up and blossom and form clusters of ripe fruit. He had held the king's cup in his hand, and had squeezed the juice of the grapes into it and presented it to the king. Joseph understood the meaning of the dream at once. "Listen to its interpretation," said he. "The three branches signify three days. At the end of that time you shall once more occupy your former place of honor at the king's court. And then," he added, "when it is well with you, think of me and make mention of me to the king that he may release me from this place. For I have been kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and have done nothing wrong to deserve to be shut up here." Now, when the chief baker heard the favorable

interpretation which Joseph had given of his companion's dream he hoped for the same lot himself; but his hopes were disappointed. For when he had told him how in his dream he had seen himself with three baskets upon his head, the topmost of them full of all kinds of baked food for the king's table, and how this food had all been eaten up by the birds, he heard to his dismay that the three baskets, like the three branches, represented as many days, and that he too should be exalted, as well as the butler, after three days, but exalted in a very different sense; for he should be hanged, and should be a prey to the birds.

What Joseph foretold took place. After three days it was the king's birthday, and he had a feast prepared for all his courtiers. Then he restored the chief butler to his former office, and allowed him once more to hand him his wine-cup, but he had the chief baker hanged. And now the hour for Joseph's release might soon have struck if only the butler had borne him in mind. But he forgot all about him.

The victim of persecution, treachery, and ingratitude on the part of men, Joseph remained in prison. But Yahweh still remembered him. He determined to set him at liberty, and therefore quickened the chief butler's memory. For, two years after what has just been narrated, the king too had a dream. There was not one of all his interpreters who could explain what he had seen. As he stood in his sleep by the bank of the Nile he saw seven oxen rise out of the river. They were fine and fat, and they went quietly grazing in the pastures along the river. Then all at once seven more oxen rose out of it, and these were ugly and lean, so that the king had never seen their like for ugliness, and they went up to the fat ones that came out first and ate them up, all seven of them, but yet they were still as thin as ever themselves. When he had seen this vision the king woke up, but soon to fall asleep again and to dream a second time. This time he saw seven rich heavy ears of corn, growing out of one stem, and then seven lank thin ears, parched by the east wind, and these ate up the first. Terrified and disturbed, the king next morning, summoned all the wise and learned men of Egypt to explain the dreams to him. But they could not do so. Then the past came back before the chief butler's mind, and he said to the king, "My lord, I remember my sin. Two years ago you were angry with me and threw me, together with the chief baker, into prison. Now, once when we both of us had had dreams, there was a Hebrew lad there, a

slave of the captain of the life-guard, and when we told him our dreams, not only did he interpret them in a moment, but what is more, the interpretation proved to be true. For he foretold that I should be restored to honor, and that he would be put to death."

The king sent for Joseph at once. They shaved his head bare, according to the custom of the Egyptians (for they never let their hair grow unless they were in mourning), and gave him a suitable garment for appearing at court. Thus prepared he entered the palace. Then Pharaoh addressed him and said, "I have dreamed a dream, which no one can interpret for me. Now, I have heard that you can interpret every dream as soon as you hear it." "Not so," was the young man's modest answer, "but I trust that God will foretell something acceptable to the king." Then the prince recounted his dreams, and they did not remain uninterpreted. "Your two dreams have but one meaning," said Joseph, "the fat oxen and the full ears signify seven years of plenty, while the lean beasts and lank ears of corn foretell seven years of famine. The famine thus foretold will be so dreadful that the plenty which has gone before will be forgotten, and all Egypt will sink under it. As to the repetition of the dream, it is a proof of the certainty of the prediction that the same truth is declared in two different ways." Having assigned this meaning to the dreams, Joseph added a piece of good advice on the subject. "The king," said he, "should set some intelligent and competent man over the whole of Egypt, and should have granaries made for him in which to collect one-fifth of the produce of the land during the years of plenty to be saved for the times of want that will follow."

The king was much relieved to understand the meaning of the warning he had received, and was no less pleased with Joseph's sensible advice. The conduct of the latter had made a favorable impression on the courtiers too, and they quite agreed with the king, therefore, that a more suitable person could hardly be found to carry out these extensive plans than Joseph himself. For clearly the spirit of God was in him. So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no wiser man than you, and you shall be the ruler of all the land of Egypt, responsible to no one but me." No sooner had the king uttered these words than he drew his signet ring from off his hand and gave it to the newly appointed grand vizier.

Then he told them to provide him with the royal garb of the priesthood, and to throw a chain of gold round his neck. Immediately after this he received homage. He rode all through the capital, in the second royal chariot, while the heralds that went before him cried to the people "Kneel down! Kneel down!"

This new dignity was matched by a new name, and Joseph received the high-sounding Egyptian title "Saphnat-Panéah," which means, according to some authorities, "deliverer of the world," and according to others "food of the living." Moreover, he received Asnat, daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, in marriage.

The prediction was soon fulfilled. There came years of unheard-of plenty. The corn was laid up in the cities by Joseph's orders in amazing quantities, and the harvest was so great that it was no longer possible even to measure the stores that were gathered together. But after seven years this abundance was followed by scarcity. The crops failed year after year, and the helpless people were directed to Joseph, who now opened his granaries and sold the corn. So all the Egyptians streamed to Joseph to buy bread. Nay, the whole world came to Egypt for provisions, for the famine was universal.

If we read this story straight through it runs pretty smoothly, and we should hardly guess that, like most of the legends of the patriarchs, it is put together from two accounts. So it is, however. Here and there slight contradictions and repetitions betray the joints and fastenings, and show us that the work is not all of one piece. In many points the two traditions differ considerably from each other. According to one, for example, Joseph is sold to some Ishmaelites by his brothers, while the other relates that he was thrown into the well by his brothers, and was found there by some Midianites who were passing by, so that he was really stolen, as he tells the chief butler in prison, from the land of Canaan, which is here described, somewhat prematurely, as the land of the Hebrews. According to one tradition he is imprisoned on the accusation of Potiphar's wife; the other knows nothing of this circumstance, and brings Joseph to the prison not as accused of any crime, but simply as the slave of Potiphar who had charge of the prisoners. If we could separate the two stories accurately we should have mentioned each of them separately. But as that is at present

impossible, we have given the narrative as it lies before us in Genesis.

In whatever particulars the two legends about Joseph may have departed from each other, it is evident that they both mention him with honor; but while the one dwells more on his strict morality and especially his chastity, the other represents him as the man to whom his god revealed his pleasure, especially by means of dreams and the gift of interpreting them. For the whole story hinges upon dreams. Joseph dreams; the butler and the baker dream; and Pharaoh dreams. And it is clear that very great importance is attached to these visions, for they all come out true, and are evidently looked upon as communications from God.

This seems strange to us, who use the word *dream* as the symbol of all that is vain and unreal, but it was not by any means so in ancient times. It was the common belief of all nations that dreams were sent by the gods, and of course, as a necessary consequence, that the art of interpreting them was a science. It is easy to see how this belief came to be held. The dread of everything incomprehensible played an important part in the formation of the religious representations and ideas of the ancients, and it need not surprise us therefore if the mysterious phenomena of dreams, the clearness with which one sometimes sees all kinds of things in one's sleep, the misery or delight one experiences on these occasions, the recollection, sometimes so clear and sometimes so confused, that is left behind, — it need not surprise us, I say, if all this made a deep impression upon people's minds, and was ascribed to the action of a deity.

There is a characteristic passage about dreams and their interpretation in the works of the celebrated Roman author Cicero, which helps us to understand the views of the ancients in the last century before Christ, in a time, that is, when people were beginning to give themselves some account of their beliefs. Cicero attaches great importance to dreams, and says that "what happens to a seer or soothsayer in his waking hours is experienced by ordinary people when asleep. For then, while the body is prostrate and almost dead, the soul is awake, and is free from the influence of the senses, and from all distracting care. Since the soul has existed from all eternity and has held intercourse with countless numbers of other souls, it sees everything that lies in the nature of things, if only it is not too much disturbed by excess of eating and drinking to be able to keep awake while the body is asleep.

Thus it is that the dreamer has power to read the future. The power of interpreting what the dreamer sees is, then, no natural gift, but an artificially acquired power. And so, too, with oracles and predictions. In all these cases the interpreters explain these phenomena just as the grammarians and commentators explain the poets. What use could we make of the metals if we were not taught how to find them? Of what use would timber be to us, but for the carpenter's art? So to every good gift that the gods have given man there is attached an art by which he can make use of it. Inasmuch, then, as there is a great deal that is obscure and ambiguous in dreams, oracles and predictions, we have recourse to the explanations of the interpreters." Such was the argument of a philosopher from whose mind simple unreasoning faith had long vanished. In earlier times no such arguments as these were used, but people believed — without ever for a moment doubting the truth of their belief — in the first place that it was often God's will to reveal the future to man, and in the next place that dreams were amongst the means by which he did so. And thus in Israel, too, the dream, together with the vision of the prophet and the oracle of the priest, was looked upon as a very common means by which Yahweh revealed his will; and the "dreamers" are mentioned by the side of the prophets and the priests.[1] The proverb-writers or "sages" of Israel appear to have attached less importance to dreams, and at any rate to have called in question their value as means of prediction. Thus, in the latter portion of the book of Job, which was added to it at least a century after the Babylonian captivity,[2] Elihu says :[3]

> God makes himself heard in this wise
> And in that wise; but men mark it not.
> In dreams and in visions of the night,
> When a deep sleep falls upon men
> And they slumber tranquilly on their beds;
> Then he opens the ear of man
> And stamps the seal on his exhortations,
> To hold him back from the deed of horror,
> And to estrange him from pride;
> To deliver his soul from the grave
> And his life from the arrows of death.

Here then, as in another passage,[4] a dream is said to be sent by God, but only as an exhortation to men. Later sages deny the predictive value of dreams still more emphati-

[1] Numbers xii. 6. 1 Samuel xxviii. 6, 15. Joel ii. 28. Deuteronomy xiii. 1–5.
[2] See vol. ii., chapter xiv. p. 165.
[3] Job xxxiii. 14–18.
[4] Job iv. 12 ff.

cally. One treats them as parallel with "vanities."[1] and another says straight out:[2]

Vain and deceitful hopes befit the senseless man,
And dreams make fools rejoice.
Like one who grasps at a shadow and chases the wind,
Is he who puts trust in dreams.
A dream is a reflection of something that is,
The reflex of face against face.
How then can the clean come out of the unclean?
Or truth out of a lie?
Oracles and soothsaying and dreams are deceit,
Mere imaginings of the heart, as of one racked by pain.
Then if dreams are not sent by the High One,
Set not thy heart upon them in trouble.
Dreams have led many astray e'er now,
And they that trusted to them have fallen.

At the very time, however, when this Israelite was denying, with such quiet good sense, that dreams had any value, the old superstition still lived in undiminished strength in the minds of the masses; and the art of interpreting dreams, together with its character as a gift of God, was glorified in the person of Daniel.[3]

At the time when the stories about Joseph were written, no doubts had yet risen as to the divine origin of dreams, and there was no difficulty, therefore, in sketching the ancestor of Ephraim and Manasseh as a man who enjoyed, by God's favor, the privilege of having prophetic dreams himself, and being able to interpret those of others.

Joseph is described as the favored of Yahweh; and in the next chapter we shall consider the connection between this fact and the moral excellence which is ascribed to him. We will close this chapter by citing an Israelite song, which shows how much importance was attached to the favor of Yahweh by his worshippers:[4]

Preserve me, O God! for I trust in thee.
I say to Yahweh, "Thou art my lord,
My bliss can be found in thee alone."
. . . .
Yahweh is my heritage and my cup;
Thou holdest my lot in thy hand.
Lovely places have been given to me,
And my heritage is fair in my eyes.
I will praise Yahweh, for he gives me counsel,
And my heart teaches me by night.
I set Yahweh ever before my mind,
For if he stands beside me I shall not be shaken.
Therefore my heart rejoices,
Therefore my soul is glad,
And my body shall dwell in safety.

[1] Ecclesiastes v. 7.
[2] Jesus son of Sirach xxxiv. 1–7.
[3] See vol. ii., chapter xxii. p. 237.
[4] Psalm xvi.

For thou wilt not surrender my soul to the shadow-land,[1]
Nor suffer thy favored one to look on the pit,
Thou wilt teach me the way to abide in life.
Joy is before thy face,
Beauty in thy right hand, for ever.

Chapter XXVII.

JOSEPH, THE LORD OF HIS BROTHERS.

Gen. XLII.–XLV.

CANAAN, — so the story goes on — like every other country, felt the effects of the famine that Joseph had foretold; and Jacob and his family soon began to be in want. They were already reduced to great distress when the father said to his sons, "Why do you look at each other in that helpless way? See, they tell me that corn is to be had in Egypt. So go there and lay in provisions to keep us alive." Joseph's brothers attended to their father's sensible advice, and all the ten of them set out for Egypt. But Jacob would not let Benjamin accompany them, for fear some accident should befall him on the journey.

So once on a time, when Joseph was busy selling corn, and people from all quarters of the world came before him, his own brothers appeared amid the crowd and bowed down in reverence before him as the governor of the land. Now, though they did not recognize him, he knew who they were at once, and all the past rushed into his mind. So now his dreams had come true, and his brothers were bowing down before him! What sufferings they had brought upon him because of these dreams! They deserved a heavy punishment; and though he had no intention of dealing with them after their deserts, yet they must not be allowed to escape entirely unchastised. They must be made to feel that sin never goes unpunished. So he met them with the words, "You are spies! You have come to see at what point the country is open to attack." His brothers answered in dismay, "No! no! We are all sons of the same father; honorable men and no spies." "I don't believe you," he replied. "You are come to see where the frontier is exposed." "No! my Lord," answered they, repeating their first assertion at greater

[1] After an amended version.

length. "There were twelve of us once, but the youngest has stayed at home with our father, in the land of Canaan, and one is no more." But Joseph put an end to all contradiction by saying, "I don't believe a word that you have said, but we must find out the truth of the matter. Send one of your number home, while the rest stay here as prisoners, and have your youngest brother brought here. Unless what you have said is true then as sure as Pharaoh lives you shall be treated as spies." So he kept them three days in prison, and then sent for them and said, "Listen to me. I am a God-fearing man, and will not act unreasonably. Let one of you remain here, while all the rest go back with provisions for your family, and then come here again with your youngest brother."

Then Joseph's brothers said to each other in their misery, "We have deserved it all! For did we not see our brother's anguish when he begged us for mercy without being moved by it. It is for his sake that this misery has come upon us." And Reuben said to them, "I told you not to injure the lad, but you would not listen to me. Now his blood is required at our hands." So they spoke amongst themselves, not knowing that Joseph could understand them; for he kept up his Egyptian character well, and always spoke with them through an interpreter. But now he could hardly contain himself, and hurried away from the hall to weep aloud. As soon as he had recovered his self-command he returned to see his sentence carried out. One of his brothers must remain behind. He spared Reuben because he knew that he was guiltless, but Simeon, the second brother, was put into fetters in the presence of the others, and led away as a hostage.

By Joseph's orders his brothers' corn-sacks were now filled with grain, and their money was secretly put in at the top, besides which they had provisions for their journey given them. Now, as they were going home one of them opened his sack at an inn to get out some food for his beast, and there, to his great surprise, he found his money. This mystery filled them all with fear. "What has God done to us now!" they cried in amazement.

So they came back to Jacob, and told him all that had happened; and when each one of them found his money in his sack they and their father were again greatly disturbed. Jacob, in despair at the dreadful demand of the Egyptian ruler, cried out: "How you are robbing me! Joseph is not; Simeon is not; and now you will take Benjamin away from me too! Everything goes against me!" Reuben now

showed once more that he was worthy of his position as the eldest of the brothers, for he came forward and offered his two sons as surety. He gave his father leave to kill them if he failed to bring Benjamin back alive. It is true that his father would not have gained much by doing so, but the offer, which is quite in the spirit of the age, at any rate showed how thoroughly he was in earnest when he said: "Trust him to me; I will take care of him." But Jacob would not be persuaded, and refused to let Benjamin go. Now that Joseph was dead, was not he the only child of his beloved Rachel that was left? If any accident happened to him on the way, his gray hairs would go down in sorrow to the world below.

But after a time they were pressed by want. The corn was all used up, and Jacob himself urged his sons to go to Egypt to get some more food. But they objected to going unless they might take Benjamin with them; and indeed roundly refused to do so, as well they might, for it would have been certain death! Jacob, whom his agony of mind made utterly unreasonable, exclaimed, "What business had you to tell that man that you had another brother at home at all?" "He asked us about our father," said they, "whether he was still living, and whether we had another brother. How were we to know that he would say, Bring him here?" Then Judah took the lead in pressing his father and urging him to consent. "I will go surety for him," he said; "you may claim him back from me. If I fail to bring him back safe and sound you may hold me responsible all my life, and may do what you like to me! Only give your consent, to keep us and our children alive. If we had not wasted so much time we might have been there and back twice over by now."

Thus persuaded, Jacob at last gave way. "If it cannot be helped, then so be it," he said. "Take presents of the most precious products of the country with you, as a token of respect for this man, and double money, so as to be able to return what you found in your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight." And then he added with a sigh, "Take your brother with you, then, and go back to this man, and God Almighty give you grace in his eyes, so that he may let Simeon and Benjamin come back. As for me, if I must be left utterly childless, I cannot help it!" Joseph's brothers started upon their journey at once, and reached the capital of Egypt in safety.

Then they stood once more in the presence of Joseph; and when he saw them again and recognized Benjamin in the

midst of them, he ordered his steward to take them to his house, and to make everything ready there for them to take their evening meal with him. But Jacob's sons had been made suspicious (and no wonder) by all the disagreeable and mysterious adventures they had met with in the foreign land; and they were afraid, therefore, that some trap was being laid for them. "Ah, sir!" they said to their guide, "last time we were here our money came back again, we know not how, into our sacks, but we have brought it with us now." But they were set at peace at once on this point, for the Egyptian told them that he knew nothing about it except that he had received their money. "No doubt your god and the god of your fathers made you find a treasure in this way in your sacks," he said.

Reassured to some extent, they went into the palace, and there they were soon joined by Simeon. They thought it a good sign that they were politely received, that some slaves came to wash their feet, and that their beasts were provided with fodder; and they spread out their presents and awaited the viceroy of Egypt with greatly decreased anxiety. When he came he graciously accepted the tokens of their respect, and asked them in a friendly manner, "How do you fare? And the aged father of whom you spoke, how is he? Is he still alive?" "He still lives," they answered, prostrating themselves on the earth again, "and we all are well." So far Joseph had easily restrained his feelings; but when he looked at Benjamin, the son of his own mother, he could hardly utter the words, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke? God bless you, my son." Then he hurried away to another chamber and found relief in tears; and after he had washed himself, to remove every trace of his emotion, he came back again and ordered them to prepare the meal.

Here was fresh matter to excite the wonder of Jacob's sons. For while a separate table was spread for them (since an Egyptian might not eat at the same table with foreigners, especially shepherds, such as these Hebrews were) they were all arranged in the order of their ages. Was it an accident, or did this man know their ages? He seemed to feel himself especially drawn towards Benjamin; for though they all had dishes sent to them from his table, yet Benjamin's share was always five times as large as that of any of the others, which was a great sign of favor. For the rest, their reception left nothing to be desired, and they drank — even to excess — with their host, and forgot all their cares.

Next morning they set out on their journey in good spirits. But what a mysterious country this Egypt was! What was the meaning of all that had befallen them, and what possessed this viceroy? They could not make it out, but "all's well that ends well," and the brothers, all eleven of them, went on their homeward way, carrying their corn with them. With all the greater weight did the blow dealt them by Joseph now fall upon them! He had ordered not only that their money should be hidden in their sacks once more, but that his own silver cup as well should be placed in that of Benjamin. Now they had not gone far on their way before they were overtaken by a band of horsemen, headed by the very man who had conducted them to Joseph's palace. They are accused, with bitter reproaches, of having stolen the cup from which their host is in the habit of drinking and of divining the future. In vain they protest that they are innocent. A thorough search must be made. So be it then; and let him in whose possession the cup is found be the Egyptian's slave! But however certain that none of them has stolen the cup, they feel uneasy enough, for so many strange things have happened to them. Reuben's sack is examined first. There lies the money in its mouth again, but no cup! The same with Simeon, with Levi, with Judah, and so on all through, till at last they come to Benjamin's sack, and there — oh horror! — by the money in the sack's mouth lies . . . the cup! They stand aghast. They tear their clothes. Before long they have put the corn upon the beasts again, and are all on their way back to the city.

Once more they stand before the Egyptian ruler, in that same house in which they had feasted with him the day before. They fall to the ground, with Judah at their head, but are met with the reproachful words, "What have you been doing? Did you not know that such a man as I am would discover your guilt?" Then Judah came forward as the representative of them all, and said, "What are we to say to my lord? We have nothing to bring forward in our defence. God is bringing your servants' trespass home to them. See, we are your slaves, all of us, just as much as he in whose possession the cup was found." "Not at all," was the reply. "I have no wish for that. The one in whose possession this cup was found must remain here as my slave, but the rest of you may go back in peace to your father." Then Judah spoke once more in the agony of his soul, and said, "Oh, sir, listen to my words, and be not angry; for you are as great as Pharaoh. When first we came here you asked us whether we still had a

father or another brother, and we answered that we could still rejoice in the life of our aged father, and that we had one more brother, still young, born to him in his old age, and that his only whole brother was dead, so that his father loved him more than us all. And then you asked us to bring him with us because you wished to see him, and though we stoutly declared that it could not be, because he was so young that he would die if he were parted from his father, yet you drove us to compliance by threatening that you would never let us come into your sight again without him. So when our father urged us to come here again to buy corn, and we insisted on taking the boy with us, he reminded us, weeping, of all that had taken place, how he had only had two sons by the mother of this boy, and how the elder had disappeared in such a way that he could not choose but think he had been torn to pieces, and he told us that it would be the death of him if the boy perished on the way. So if we go home without him, we shall make our gray-headed father go down with sorrow to the world below. And now, my lord, I have gone surety for him. Let me stay, then, instead of him, and let him go back with my brothers; for how could I ever go into my father's presence if the boy were no longer with us? I could not bear to look upon the anguish which would seize him."

Joseph could now hold out no longer. He hastily ordered his retinue to retire, and almost before they were alone he burst into tears and cried, "I am Joseph! Is my father yet alive?" His brothers stood riveted to the ground, and could not believe their ears. When they had all recovered themselves a little, Joseph made them come nearer and said: "I am indeed your brother, whom you sold as a slave to Egypt; but now do not mourn or be disturbed about that any more, for God sent me before you, as it were, to deliver you from the famine. Besides the two years that have gone there are still five years of famine coming, and God has led me here to protect you from dying of starvation, for you are to grow into a great nation. So it was not you, but God, that sent me here. He has made me the king's adviser, and the ruler over all his possessions and the governor of the whole of Egypt. Go then to our father with all speed and invite him in my name to come here and settle with all his belongings in the land of Goshen, near to me, and I will maintain him there for the five coming years. Surely none of you doubt that I am really he? Benjamin, my brother! surely you remember me? Tell my father, then, what honor I have come to in this land, and

bring him here with all speed." Then Joseph fell upon Benjamin's neck and kissed him, and Benjamin wept as he embraced him. He greeted with kisses and with tears the rest of his brothers too; until at last they found words again in which to speak to him.

Meanwhile the king had been informed of everything. The very fact that as soon as Joseph was left alone with these Hebrews he began to weep had excited attention in itself; and it soon became known that they were his brothers. The king confirmed the arrangements made by Joseph for his father's migration, and gave his brothers vehicles for their wives and children and provisions for the journey, telling them that they need not trouble themselves about the furniture, but might leave it behind them without any anxiety, as they should have full command of the wealth of Egypt.

When Joseph took leave of his brothers he gave them each a complete suit of festal garments, presented Benjamin with a large sum of money and five robes of state, and sent his father ten asses laden with precious Egyptian wares and ten she-asses laden with necessaries of life.

Now, when Jacob's sons came back to their father and said to him, "Joseph is still alive and is governor of the whole of Egypt," he was utterly amazed and could not believe it was true. But when they had told him all Joseph's words, and when he had seen the chariots that he had sent him, he came to himself again, and his overflowing heart found relief in the joyful cry, "It is too much! Joseph my son, still living! Let me go and see him before I die!"

The story of Joseph often reminds us of a telling drama or a thrilling romance. For it works powerfully upon the feelings, and has a certain fascination throughout, while its life and movement keep the attention constantly fixed, and an unexpected and happy conclusion brings the story to an end. The pleasure that children take in listening to it shows the skill of the authors. I speak of *authors* (in the plural) because this portion, like what has gone before, is put together from the work of two writers. But if once children's feelings are worked upon so that they can live with the heroes of a story, or, still better, so that they can cry with them too, they let many defects pass unnoticed, and are not at all troubled by improbabilities or even impossibilities. Nay, still worse, even their moral perceptions are sometimes lulled to sleep when their imagination is taken captive by a telling and fascinating

story. Both these facts are strikingly exemplified in the favorable reception given by children to the story of Joseph.

No thoughtful person can long remain in doubt as to the historical or unhistorical character of what is here related. For we cannot possibly look upon a story as historical when sundry dreams, regarded as divine revelations, appear in it, and its development hinges to a large extent upon these dreams and their fulfilment. But we have spoken of this already. Now let us examine the portion of the narrative that we have dealt with in this chapter. The representation here given is impossibility itself.

Only think for a moment of these points.

The famine was foretold seven years before it began, and during the whole interval the king did everything that could be done to lighten the misery that was to come. Yet no one else in Egypt or elsewhere appears to have taken any precautions, though there was nothing to prevent every one's knowing all about it. Moreover, the whole world suffers from the famine, and is obliged to go to Egypt for corn. This is necessarily involved in the story; for why else should Jacob's sons have chosen Egypt for their second as well as their first purchase of corn? Is such a state of things credible in real life? Again, Jacob sends ten of his sons, each with his own ass, to buy corn. One cannot help asking why he did not send one son at the head of a caravan? What little provision was laid in in this way, however, cannot have gone far toward supporting the whole family, especially, if, as we are told, part of it had to be used as fodder for the beasts on the way. And yet the story tells us distinctly that each one of Jacob's sons took his own sack with him upon his own ass; else how could it be said that the cup was hidden, and afterwards found, in Benjamin's special sack? In Egypt things are managed after a somewhat homely fashion. Joseph sells corn to all the world in person. This is almost impossible to imagine, but it is distinctly the meaning of the story; for if Jacob's sons could have managed to obtain corn from any one else, they would certainly have done so on their second journey, since it was not to obtain Simeon's release, but simply to escape dying of hunger, that they returned to Egypt and came once more into Joseph's presence. It would appear from the story that there were no merchants in Egypt, and that no creature could carry corn to Canaan without buying it from the viceroy in person. Finally, as already observed in another connection,[1] the representation of Benjamin as a

[1] See p. 102.

boy whose life would be in danger if he were separated from his father, hardly agrees with another piece of information according to which he was at this very time the father of ten sons.

It would hardly be worth while to stay to inquire expressly whether Joseph's conduct will bear testing, had not his character often been described as noble, and even as one of the the most exalted to be found in the Old Testament. But since our moral perception may easily suffer from such perverted judgments, we must enter an emphatic protest against this excessive praise of him. Joseph as a boy, repeating a dream in which his own exaltation is foretold, twice over, and telling his father tales about his brothers, is surely no one's ideal; but the brutal chastisement inflicted on him by his brothers seems at least to have had the effect of taking down his conceit. At any rate, when in Egypt he is the model of a faithful and pious slave, and his answer to Potiphar's wife — "How should I do such wickedness and sin against God?" — is full of nobility and earnestness. But his conduct towards his brothers, which is the main point after all, is anything but generous, and shows that he took an unfeeling and spiteful pleasure in annoying them. He conceals the fact that he recognizes them at once, and knowingly and purposely brings a false accusation against them; he puts them in prison three days — keeps Simeon back — compels his brother Benjamin, whom he is said to have loved tenderly, to undertake a journey which his father fears may be fatal to him — disturbs and alarms his brothers on two occasions by means of the money which they find mysteriously returned into their sacks — relieves them from their anxiety by his friendly reception, only to make them still more uneasy about the cup that is found in Benjamin's sack of corn — and, most inexcusable of all, entirely overlooks the great and bitter sorrow that his conduct inflicts upon his gray-headed father. In the story it all turns out well, but, supposing it to be true, "more by good luck than good conduct."

Though the writers intended their Joseph for a sketch of a model son and brother, they have not been successful. Joseph certainly seems very tender-hearted, and weeps when he sees his brothers on the first occasion, and again when he meets Benjamin afterwards; but for all that he is hard-hearted enough systematically in cold blood to punish them for the suffering they inflicted on him. It is sometimes thought that his conduct may be defended by supposing that his object was to see

whether his brothers would behave any better towards Benjamin than they had done towards himself; but we must remember, in the first place, that no such object is hinted at by a single word in the story; and, in the second place, that it does not make out a better case for Joseph after all. Has a man a right to test his neighbor's disposition by putting him to the torture? Is that unassuming and amiable conduct? Surely not.

There is one point in the story which is only a minor feature, but which must not be overlooked in forming an estimate of Joseph's person. We are told of a divining cup used by him. The kind of divination here indicated was known to various peoples of antiquity, and was conducted as follows: Little bits of gold or silver were thrown into a cup full of water, and sometimes precious stones, with certain characters carved upon them, were added. From the figures found in the water, by the reflection of these objects, those skilled in the art made out the future. Others did something the same with melted wax, and read the events of the future from the combinations of the little pieces. This kind of divination was well known in Egypt, and apparently in Israel too; for the writer of the legend of Joseph finds it quite unnecessary to explain the nature of the cup to his readers, nor does he utter a single word of disapproval of its use. Indeed, any such disapprobation was not in the spirit of his age. We shall presently have occasion to notice more than once, that though sorcery was opposed by some of the most advanced Israelites, until at last it was forbidden in the Law, yet the sorcerers, wizards, and necromancers played a great part in the national life of Israel, by the side of the seers, dreamers, priests, and prophets. The prophets especially were given to meddling with these arts. In our story, this trait in Joseph's character agrees very well with his power of reading the future in his dreams and interpreting the visions of others.

Nothing is further from the intention of the writers, however, than to cast a slur upon Joseph's character. On the contrary, they desired to give him the place of honor and to sketch him as ruling over his brothers and as rescuing Egypt, or rather all the world. But in pursuing this object they make the extraordinary favor with which he was regarded by Yahweh far more conspicuous than any nobility or exaltation of his own character. For instance, when we are told that Potiphar's house was blessed for Joseph's sake we think of the natural consequence of the industry and care of a faithful servant

making order and prosperity supreme in Potiphar's house and lands. But the writer does not tell us this, and, indeed, he did not mean it. He calls Joseph "a man in whose hands everything succeeded because Yahweh helped him, and whom Potiphar set over all he had because he saw that Yahweh was with him."[1] In the same way Joseph becomes lord of Egypt, and saves his brothers from the famine, because his god had willed it so.[2] Now, when we speak of God's blessing and God's help we think especially of the blissful fruits of virtue and faith; but this divine blessing was not connected with piety in the same way to the mind of the ancient Israelites. Yahweh had his favorites and they were blessed in consequence of the protection of their god, while those whom he hated he blinded and tempted to folly, and so brought to destruction. They would say, "he who is blessed by Yahweh acts wisely and well" rather than "he who acts wisely and well is blessed by Yahweh."

In this they were at one with all antiquity, as we can easily understand, for the ancient conception of the character of the deity, as we have already seen repeatedly, was that of a nature-god. In the sun, the wind, the rain, the thunderstorm, and other favorable or destructive phenomena of nature, the ancients saw the hand of the gods. And so they ascribed no righteousness to their gods, for the sun never troubles himself about the virtue or vice of man, and the lightning strikes good and bad without distinction. They had no difficulty, therefore, in regarding their gods as capricious. They were wise, — but their wisdom was that of the power that no one could resist; they dealt according to right — but their right was might.

> Yea truly I know that it is so;
> How should a man be held just before God?
> If he sees good to contend with him,
> He cannot answer him one to a thousand.
> Wise of heart as he is and fearful in might,
> Who has opposed him and has not suffered?
> Who removes the mountains before they know it,
> And in his wrath overthrows them, &c.

The poem from which these lines are taken[3] dates from a period at which a more exalted idea of the nature of God had already found a place in many minds by the side of the old one, yet here, and all through the poem, the strongest proof of God's justice is his omnipotence.

Among the prophets of the eighth century before Christ[4]

[1] Genesis xxxix. 2–6.
[2] Genesis xlv. 8.
[3] Job. ix. 2–5.
[4] See p. 25.

there was a living conviction that Yahweh was a righteous god who rewarded the good and punished the wicked, and thus the way was prepared for the recognition of the truth that the real happiness of men depends on conditions of their inner life. But the leaven of the old nature-worship could not be expelled at once, and prosperity and adversity were still looked upon as tokens of the favor or the displeasure of God. But since prosperity does not fall to the lot of the virtuous alone, nor disaster to that of the wicked, the want of agreement between goodness and prosperity always remained a source of painful doubt; and piety was thought to consist chiefly in the confident belief that Yahweh would really give what was good to those whom he loved. This belief, as we shall presently see, more than once decided the practical line of action taken by the people, and we find utterance given to it in some of the most beautiful of the psalms of the Israelites. We may close this chapter with one of them.[1]

Blessed is he who abides under the protection of the Most High,
  Who passes the night in the shadow of the Almighty,
Who says to Yahweh, "My refuge and fortress,
  The god upon whom I trust!"
For he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler,
  And from the terrible pestilence;
With his pinions shall he cover thee,
  And under his wings shalt thou find a refuge,
  His faith is a shield and an armor.
Thou shalt not fear for the terror by night,
  Nor for the arrow that flieth by day:
Nor for the pestilence creeping round in the darkness,
  Nor the plague that wasteth at noonday.
At thy side shall a thousand fall,
  Ten thousand at thy right hand,
  But it shall not come to thee.
But thou shalt see with thine eyes
  And behold the reward of the wicked.
Because thou hast called Yahweh thy refuge,
  And hast made the Most High thy dwelling,
Evil shall not come nigh unto thee.
  Nor disaster draw near thy tent.
For he shall give his angels charge over thee
  To protect thee in all thy ways.
They shall bear thee up in their hands,
  That thou dash not thy foot on a stone.
Thou shalt tread on the roaring beast and the adder,
  And trample upon the lion and dragon.

Because he trusts in me I will deliver him,
  I will exalt him, because he knows my name.
When he calls upon me I will answer him,
  In time of need I will be with him.
I will deliver him and will give him honor.
  I will lengthen his life till he be satisfied,
  And will make him to see my salvation.

[1] Psalm xci.

These verses require little or no explanation. In the last few lines it appears that Yahweh is introduced as speaking. One word, however, on lines ten and eleven, in which mention is made of a terror by night and an arrow that flies by day. The meaning of the arrow is obvious. It is the symbol of a sunbeam, to the influence of which the origin of the pestilence was attributed in ancient times. The "terror by night," therefore, is some other cause of sickness that was supposed to be active at night. The idea contained in these lines, therefore, is exactly the same as that of the two next. This is very common in Hebrew poems; for they seldom or never have any measure or rhyme, but are distinguished from prose, in outward form, by the repetition of the same thought in different words two or three times in succession. This may well seem strange to us, for we are accustomed to rhyme and rhythm, or at any rate the latter, in all our verses. Yet neither the one nor the other is by any means inseparable from poetical language. The peculiarity of poetry is that in it a man who is inspired by some passion, whether noble or the reverse, gives expression to his feelings; and the more artificial the form in which he does so the smaller the chance of the substance being really poetical. But when a man, in a highly wrought frame of mind, is driven by pressure from within to utter what is going on in his heart and to pour out his soul in words, nothing is more natural than for him to repeat the same thing in different forms two or even three times over; for passion never stints its words. This repetition by which the second member of a sentence fills in the first, even a third being sometimes added, is called "parallelism." In the poem just quoted almost every couplet or triplet is an example of what has been said.

Chapter XXVIII.

JACOB IN EGYPT.

Gen. XLVI.–L.

THE arrival of Jacob, or Israel, in Egypt — his settlement in the land of Goshen — his adoption of Joseph's sons as his own, immediately before his death — his burial in the land of Canaan — Joseph's continued protection of his

brothers and all their belongings after his father's death. till he himself paid the last debt of nature — such are the events recorded in the remaining chapters of Genesis. The narrative is not very interesting, and it is easy to see why; for it is put together from various sources — at least three narrators, who agree with each other in the main points, but are here and there at variance, having had a hand in it. This has naturally given rise to repetitions and confusions. We will first run over the narrative as briefly as possible, and then dwell upon one or two special points.

Jacob departed with all speed for Egypt. As he passed through Beersheba, on his way, he made an offering to the god of his father Isaac, who had always lived there; and in a vision by night he received a renewed assurance of God's protection. His heavenly guide would be with him in Egypt too, and Joseph should close his eyes. The company now migrating to Egypt, seventy in number, reached Goshen without interruption, and there Joseph, informed of the arrival of his kinsmen by Judah, who had gone on before them, came in his chariot to meet them. "Now that I have seen you once again, I can die in peace!" cried his father, overcome with joy.

Joseph promised his kinsmen that he would tell the king that they had come, and advised them, when questioned by him as to their occupation, to tell him at once that they were shepherds, and therefore wished to live in the land of Goshen. For the disgust in which the Egyptians held all shepherds and goatherds made it desirable that they should settle in some border district, the population of which was not pure Egyptian, and was rather more accustomed to intercourse with strangers. Five of Joseph's brothers waited on the king, who heard them graciously and granted their request. Jacob, too, was brought into his presence, and blessed him with a patriarch's authority. When questioned by the king as to his age, he answered that he was a hundred and thirty, but he could not help adding a remark that showed no great contentment with his lot, namely, that his ancestors had reached a much greater age, and that his life had been full of trouble.

An enviable lot was that of Israel's sons in the land of Goshen, or Ramses. For, during the continued famine in Egypt, they were supported by Joseph, while the native Egyptians were compelled to make heavier and heavier sacrifices to keep themselves and their families alive. In the

very first year of the famine the Egyptians spent all their money and even gave up their cattle in exchange for the necessaries of life; and in the second year they sold themselves and their land to the king. Thus the prince became absolute master of the whole of Egypt. He made ample use of his power, and commanded that henceforth a tax of one-fifth of the produce of the land should flow into the royal coffers. The priests alone kept possession of their land, for they had a sufficient supply of food given them for nothing.

The Israelites meanwhile had greatly increased in numbers. Seventeen years after his removal to Egypt Jacob felt that his end was drawing near. He died in Joseph's arms, after having made all necessary dispositions as to his own burial and the future of his sons. Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians, to embalm his father's body in the most costly manner. This preparation occupied forty days, after which the Egyptians went into public mourning for seventy days for the father of their viceroy. Then Joseph, who could not appear before the king in person while still in mourning, asked leave through his courtiers to go and bury his father in his own grave in Canaan, as he himself had wished. As soon as he had received permission, he went with all his father's sons and grandsons and a great host of Egyptians to Canaan. At a certain place called "the plain of thorns," on the other side of the Jordan, they stayed their course and spent a week in lamentations, from which circumstance the place was afterwards called by the inhabitants Abel-mizraim, that is *lamentation of Egypt*. Then Jacob was buried by his sons.

Now that their father was dead Joseph's brothers began to fear that he would pay them back for their evil deeds of long ago, so they said to him in the greatest anxiety: "Our father told us, before he died, to implore you to forgive the sins of your brothers, the worshippers of your father's god." On hearing these words Joseph burst into tears, and said, as they fell at his feet with every sign of absolute submission, "Fear nothing! Am I in the place of God? Though you plotted evil against me, yet God has turned it to good, to rescue a great people, as has actually come to pass. You have nothing to fear. I shall preserve your lives and the lives of your little children." With such words he comforted them.

Joseph lived to a hundred and ten and saw his grandchildren's children. When he felt that his end was drawing

near, he called his kinsmen to him and made them swear that when their god brought them back to the land that he had promised to their fathers, they would take his bones there with them. In order to be able to fulfil this promise they embalmed his body and kept it in Egypt.

In the account just given we have barely mentioned the dispositions made by Jacob on behalf of his sons; but in the original narrative they occupy two whole chapters. Three times we read of prophetic blessings pronounced by the patriarch on all his sons or on Joseph's children, and these accounts are derived from three different writers.

According to one of them, as Jacob lay on his death-bed he called his sons to his side to foretell their future lot to them. A poem is put into his mouth[1] on this occasion in which he speaks of all the twelve sons. Some of them, however, receive but a very short and uninteresting sentence. Thus Zebulun is informed that he will live by the sea-shore, and Dan that he will rule his tribe just like one of his brothers. So too Gad, Asher, Naphtali and Benjamin have each to be content with a single line. Far more bitter was the lot of others, who received a curse instead of a blessing. Thus Reuben is degraded from his place as first-born, Levi and Simeon are told that they will be scattered up and down in Israel, and Issachar must hear the prophecy that he will become tributary to strangers. But the patriarch dwells longer upon Judah and Joseph, and pours out a profusion of blessings upon their heads. We have already observed, in another connection,[2] that under the form of a prophecy by Jacob as to the future of his sons, the actual condition of the Israelite tribes is celebrated in this poem, which takes us into the period of the Judges, or still later.

It should be noticed that in this poem Joseph still appears as a tribe, by the side of the rest. It is otherwise in the account of the last days of Jacob given by the "Book of Origins." There we are told[3] that when Joseph visited Jacob on his death-bed, his father told him how God Almighty had appeared to him in Luz and had promised him a numerous posterity and the possession of Canaan. "And now," continued the patriarch, "your two sons, who were born before I came to Egypt, I adopt as my own. Ephraim and Manasseh shall take rank with Reuben and Simeon. If you have other children they shall be counted yours, but their descendants

[1] Genesis xlix. [2] See p. 102. [3] Genesis xlviii. 3-6.

shall be assigned to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh." This legend places us in a period at which each of these two tribes was (or had been) as powerful as any of the rest, nay stronger than several of their brethren; and it agrees with a representation, to be found in the book of Joshua, of the manner in which the land of Canaan was divided amongst the tribes. We shall deal with this matter presently.

There is another account[1] older than that of the "Book of Origins," according to which Jacob, feeble and almost blind, received a visit on his deathbed from Joseph and his two sons. "Who are those?" asked the patriarch, pointing to the two boys. "The children whom God has given me," was the reply. "Let me bless them!" said Jacob. Deeply moved, he kissed and embraced them, and said to Joseph: "See, I long despaired of ever seeing you yourself again, and now I see your children too!" Joseph removed the boys from their place between their grandfather's knees, and bowed down to the earth in reverence. Then he led his sons to his father again, and placed them so that when the old man stretched out his hands he would naturally lay his right hand on the head of the elder, Manasseh, and his left on the younger, Ephraim. But when Jacob stretched out his hands he crossed them, and so laid his right hand on Ephraim's head. He did so, not by mistake but on purpose; for when Joseph wished to alter the position of his hands he would not allow it. "No, my son!" said the old man, "I know well enough what I am doing. Manasseh, too, shall be the father of a great tribe, but his younger brother shall be mightier than he." Then he blessed them with the words: "May you be such an example of prosperity that the richest blessing in Israel may run: God make you like Ephraim and Manasseh!" Thus did he place Ephraim above Manasseh. This is the chief object of the story, and it takes us to a time when the tribe of Manasseh, that had been the mightiest in North Israel at first, was overshadowed by that of the Ephraimites.

We see from several slight traits in these stories that all the writers quite lose sight of the patriarchs as individuals, and only think of the tribes themselves. Thus Joseph's sons, who are spoken of as "lads," stand between their grandfather's knees, and he blesses them. Yet they were born before Jacob came into Egypt, and he had spent seventeen years in that country before he died. The same forgetfulness of the fact that time never stands still, and that little children grow big,

[1] Genesis xlviii. 8–22.

is shown by the writer who makes Joseph still his brothers' anxiety after Jacob's death by the words: "Fear not; I will take care of you and your little children."[1] The remarks made on a previous occasion[2] apply to the whole of the story of Joseph. The representation made to us is not that of a number of tribes migrating to Egypt, but that of a family, consisting of a father and eleven sons, with their wives and children — seventy souls; a family which, leaving the furniture behind, could move to Egypt in a few wagons sent for the purpose by the king.[3] A childlike and homely representation, but one that is quite at variance with history.

We must touch upon one more detail, and then we will pass on to an examination of the country to which Jacob and his family had come. The "Book of Origins," the writer of which, as we have seen,[4] took a great interest in the cave of Machpelah, tells us at full length here too how Jacob himself was buried there.[5] It may be doubted, however, whether this statement agrees with the oldest tradition about Jacob's last resting-place. For Joseph sends word to the king that his father wishes to be laid in the grave that he himself had made,[6] and this cannot refer to the cave of Machpelah, which Abraham had bought from the Hethites. Now, between the two accounts of the blessing of Ephraim and Manasseh,[7] the following sentence[8] is very oddly inserted: "When I came from Padan Aram, Rachel died in the land of Canaan, while I was still some way from Ephrath; and I buried her there."[9] This verse is out of place, and probably belongs to the account of Jacob's last wishes,[10] which, with this addition, would run: "Bury me not in Egypt, but take my body hence, and lay it in the grave that I have made; for, when I came from Padan Aram, Rachel died near Ephrath, and I buried her there." Then Joseph answered: "I will do as you desire." If this conjecture is well founded, then, according to the oldest account, Rachel's grave, south of Bethel,[11] was Jacob's grave as well. The writer of the "Book of Origins" thought it more suitable, in some way, that Jacob should be buried at Hebron, and accordingly said that he was.

This story draws our attention to Egypt, for it gives us several pieces of information, which are not without interest,

[1] Genesis l. 21. [2] See p. 102. [3] Genesis xlvi. 5.
[4] See pp. 153, 154. [5] Genesis xlix. 29–32, l. 12, 13.
[6] Genesis l. 5. [7] Genesis xlviii. 3–6 and 8–22.
[8] Genesis xlviii. 7. [9] See p. 194.
[10] Genesis xlvii. 30. [11] Compare pp. 196, 197.

about the condition of that country. In the first place, that all shepherds and goatherds were an abomination to the Egyptians, so that Joseph, the Egyptian, could not eat at the same table with the Hebrews, and the sons of Israel had to live in a border district. In the next place, that the king was the absolute master of the land, and that all its inhabitants were his slaves,[1] while the fifth part of the harvest fell to his share, except in the case of land belonging to the priests. The story gives us an explanation of this state of things which, if true, makes the defence of Joseph's conduct a hopeless task. For the king must have got all the corn by which he supported Egypt and "all the world" for seven years, either for nothing or for a very low price, from his subjects. Ought he then to have sold it at so high a price in the time of want that all the Egyptians were stripped of everything they possessed, and were compelled within two years to give themselves up as slaves? This is no more right than — possible!

Let us glance for a moment at the country and the people in question.

In the north-east corner of Africa, bounded on the west by the great desert of Sahara, and on the north by the Mediterranean Sea, and separated from Arabia on the east by the Red Sea and the peninsula of Sinai, lies Egypt, the valley of the mighty Nile. This stupendous river, even before it has left the highlands of Abyssinia and entered Egypt proper, is already more than three thousand feet in width. The valley fertilized by the Nile and wrested, as it were, from the sands of the desert, is on an average about eight miles broad. On the west it is protected by a range of hills from the all-engulfing sands of the Sahara and the terrible blasts of the desert wind, while it is cut off on the east also by the range of crags and sand-hills that runs along the shore of the Red Sea.

All Egypt is supported by the Nile. Every year, soon after midsummer, when the snow melts on the tops of the mountains among which both streams of the Nile (the Blue and the White Nile) take their rise, and there is a heavy fall of rain, the Lower Nile gradually rises in its bed. Towards the end of July it overflows its banks and floods the whole valley up to the foot of the hills that enclose it, till by the end of September it stands more than twenty feet above the lowest water-mark. Then the river sinks again as slowly as

[1] Genesis xlvii 21, after an amended version.

it has risen, and after covering all the land for four months it is once more confined within its banks again. In consequence of its gradual rise and fall, the water leaves a layer of rich mud behind it all over Egypt, and the air is pleasantly tempered during the hottest season of the year by the extraordinary increase in the expanse of water. It hardly ever rains in Egypt, except in the northern portion, the so-called Delta, which is cut up by the numerous branches into which the Nile is here divided as it flows through its seven mouths into the sea. The nearness of the Mediterranean Sea sometimes causes a fall of rain in this district.

This country was called by its inhabitants "Chemi," that is, *the black*, because of the color of its soil, which stood off darkly from the glittering white of the downs and the yellow of the plains of sand by which it was surrounded. The name "Egypt" was given to the country by the Greeks; and we find a corruption of this word in the name of "Copts," given to the Christian population of the country.

All the northern coast of Africa, as well as the whole valley of the Nile up to the Abyssinian mountains, was inhabited by peoples whose complexion, language, and customs formed a sharp contrast to those of the Negroes who possessed the greater part of Africa. A branch of their language still survives in that of the Berbers. Chief among them all in cultivation and knowledge was the people that dwelt on the banks of the lower Nile, and founded one of the most ancient of the civilized states of the world.

Our knowledge of Egyptian history goes back to a very high antiquity, though little more than lists of kings have come down to us from the earliest times. More than forty centuries before Christ there was a regular state in Egypt, and arts and sciences flourished there.[1] Indeed the country was well calculated to make its inhabitants thoughtful and energetic. For, though it was very fruitful, it required careful cultivation. The yearly overflowing of the Nile made it necessary to take many precautions for the protection of flocks and other possessions from the water; to observe the period at which the stream rose and fell; to collect the provisions required for the support of man and beast for months together, while the land was transformed as it were into a sea; to build boats and pass a great deal of time on the water; and accurately to fix, measure, and mark out the boundaries of the fields, to avoid constant disputes about them.

[1] See p. 66.

As the population increased, it gradually became necessary to find artificial means of bringing the fertilizing water to the land that stood too high for it to reach of itself, to rid the marshy districts of their excessive supply, and to prevent the water in general from running off too soon, so as to secure as great a deposit of mud as possible.

Thus the Egyptians were raised, alike by the advantages and disadvantages attached to the nature of their soil, into a thoughtful and industrious people.

Love of freedom, however, was certainly not one of the qualities by which they were distinguished, at any rate in the times of which the memory has come down to us. The oldest monuments of the Egyptians bear witness to their servile disposition. At the head of the nation stood the king, or Pharaoh; for this is a title, and not a proper name, as might be supposed from certain passages in the Old Testament.[1] The meaning of the word is uncertain. It is generally taken to mean "the king," while some translate it "the son of Ra" (an Egyptian god), and others "the gate." This last explanation is not so out of the way as it sounds. Thus, ever since the time of Osman (about 1300 A.D.) the government of the Turkish Empire has been called "the Sublime Porte," or simply "the Porte," that is, *the gate*. This name was first given to the principal gate of the palace, and was afterwards transferred to the power which issued its orders through this gate. If "Pharaoh" is correctly translated *the gate*, the word does not properly apply to the person of the monarch, but to the government. It is natural enough, however, that the name should have been applied to the prince himself. For Egypt was a country whose king could say with Louis XIV., the most royal of modern princes: "I am the state." On the Egyptian monuments, accordingly, we see not only laborers and soldiers, but generals, governors, and even priests lying prone upon the ground, bowed down to the dust, in the presence of the ruler. In the beginning of things, so the priests taught, the gods had ruled upon the earth, but they had handed over their jurisdiction entirely to the kings, who were not only called the sons of the gods, but the very gods of the country themselves. They bear the names of "the sun that is given to the world," "the lifegiver," or "the mighty Horus," while the queen is called "the mighty Isis;" Horus being the name of an Egyp-

[1] Genesis. xli. 46. Exodus vi. 11, &c.

tian god, and Isis that of a goddess. On the monuments, too, we often find representations of the kings sacrificing to their ancestors, and of the gods serving them. One of the Egyptian princes (Amenophis III., about 1500 B.C.) went so far as to raise a temple for the worship of himself.

Where royalty was regarded in such a light, the authority of the kings must have been unlimited; and a proof that it really was so may be found in the gigantic works they executed; for they could never have carried them out unless they had had free command of the labor of their subjects. Hundreds of thousands of laborers had to toil year after year not only upon canals, from which the people at least derived some benefit, or temples to the building of which their piety may have contributed, but also upon the magnificent palaces and the gigantic pyramids, which only served to immortalize the names of princes, and furnish them with dwellings in their lives and mausoleums after their death. Sometimes the laborers perished by thousands from exhaustion and insufficient food; but what price was too high to pay for the glory of an Egyptian prince?

It follows naturally from the unlimited character of the royal authority that the Pharaoh was really the sole proprietor of the land; for since he had absolute command of the very lives of his subjects, how much more must he have had power over their possessions! This was more or less characteristic of all eastern countries. But in Egypt the rights of the princes with regard to the soil and its produce were more accurately defined than elsewhere, and so attracted the attention of the foreigners who visited the country. The accounts they give, however, do not agree with one another. Our writer tells us, for instance, that all the land belonged by law to the king, who let it to his subjects for the payment of one-fifth of the yield, while none but the priests possessed land of their own. A certain Greek writer on the other hand tells us that the land was divided into three parts, of which one belonged to the king, one to the priests, and one to the soldiers. Another says that King Ramses the Great, of whom we shall have more to say presently, had the whole country divided into equal squares and gave one of them to each Egyptian.

Whether the account of the Israelite or that of the first Greek writer is the true one, in either case the state of things described must have arisen gradually. It is impossible to believe that within the space of a few years a free people became

a nation of slaves and that their land passed out of the hands of the people into those of the king. That the inhabitants were suddenly compelled by want to put all their goods and their very bodies at the king's disposal, is just as inconceivable as that once upon a time a prince divided the country into square fields of equal size and gave each of his subjects one of them. And yet there must be some reason why the king's rights over the land were so much more accurately regulated in Egypt than elsewhere. This reason is not difficult to find. The state, that is, the king, could not fail to gain great power in Egypt, from the fact that a regular and settled government was a pressing necessity there not only on extraordinary occasions, but at all times. For as we have seen already, the fertility of the soil, the welfare of the country, and the peaceable disposition of the citizens towards each other, all depended upon the manner in which the overflowings of the Nile were regulated and the boundaries of the fields marked out. It could not be left to the citizens themselves to make provision for all this. The matter must be taken in hand by the prince himself, who soon gained enormous power by this control of the public works. The feeling, then, of the pressing necessity of co-operation and unity had been stamped upon the Egyptians by their peculiar circumstances from the most ancient times. Thus the two primeval kingdoms — that of Memphis in Lower and of Thebes in Upper Egypt — were united together as early as the year 2300 B.C., and the king was consequently called "the lord of both the countries." One of these kings, Amenemha III., called Moeris by the Greeks, had a lake of enormous dimensions dug out near Memphis. A canal conducted a supply of water from the Nile into this lake, where it could be collected and retained when the flood was so high that there was danger of marshes being formed. It was allowed to run off again when the river did not rise as high as usual, and the flood was therefore slight. This artificial sea existed for centuries. At last the works were neglected by a careless government, and the water inside broke through and formed a natural sea near the present Fayum.

Now the construction and keeping up of such works as these, the necessity of testing the condition of the river, and opening and closing the sluices at the right time, so as to regulate the supply of water in the stream, all this not only gave the kings a great deal of power generally, but also gave them a special right over the land, the fertility of which was,

to a large extent, dependent upon their care. If we take the story of Joseph, then, in a typical rather than a literal sense, it is perfectly true. The prince who knew how to lay by in time of plenty, so as to have a supply ready for times of want, might well be called Saphnat-Paneah, or deliverer of the country, and no one in Egypt must "raise hand or foot" against his will. It was but right that he should deal with his subjects just as the general interest required, and that they should always have to pay a heavy tribute; for was not he who had command of the waters of the Nile the "life-waker" of the people?

According to our Israelite narrator, the priests of Egypt enjoyed many privileges. They were supported by supplies sent them directly from the king, so that they had no occasion to sell their lands. This sounds simple enough; but the real state of things cannot, of course, be so easily described. For in Egypt, as in every other ancient country, there was a motley mixture of various religions. The Egyptian gods and goddesses were numerous, and their temples, great and small, covered the land. Now one god, and now another, rose to the highest honor, as the preference of the king or some other circumstance dictated; and with the greater or smaller amount of honor that fell to the lot of any deity, the income of the priests, of course, rose and fell; but, generally speaking, they were not only free from the cares of want, but lived in abundance, and exercised a great deal of power, for the Egyptians were a very superstitious people, and nothing is more profitable to a priesthood than this.

According to the story in Genesis, Joseph is taken into the priestly caste; for the fine linen garment in which he is clothed forms the costume of the priests, who were never allowed to dress themselves in anything but linen. Moreover, he marries the daughter of the priest of On. At the same time the distinctive mark of royalty, the golden necklace is hung upon his neck, and he is placed in the same rank as the royal princes, for he rides in the king's second chariot, and every one has to kneel down before him. These two sets of distinctions go very well together, for in Egypt the king was also the high priest. Every other Egyptian had to approach the gods through a mediator, but the king had not.

It appears from what has been said already that the writer of the legend of Joseph was pretty well acquainted with some of the conditions and ideas of Egyptian life; and he shows

the same familiarity with them in his remark that shepherds and goatherds are an abomination to the Egyptians, that Joseph the Egyptian might not eat at the same table with the Hebrews, and that the border land of Goshen was assigned to them as their dwelling-place. But we should be quite mistaken if we were to suppose from his words that the Egyptians possessed no sheep or goats, or that the keepers of these animals were held in dishonor among them; for this was by no means the case. Our knowledge of Egyptian life is principally drawn from the pictures upon the pyramids and the walls of palaces and temples; and in these pictures we often find flocks of small cattle both at the stall and at pasture; and, indeed, the story of Joseph itself speaks of them.[1] Ancient historians tell us that the Egyptian shepherds were very clever at their trade, and, amongst other accomplishments, showed great skill in the treatment of their sick beasts. In some districts we even find sheep and goats used for sacrifices.

The Egyptians, then, did not hold all shepherds and goatherds in abomination, but they had a rooted aversion to the foreign shepherd tribes that hung upon the north-eastern boundary of their country pasturing sheep and goats. Dislike of all foreigners was remarkably intense in Egypt, but it was more especially against these special tribes that the hatred of the native population was directed. This hatred was not unfounded; for about the year 2100 B.C. the whole kingdom of Memphis fell into the power of certain tribes of Syrian shepherds. They had pushed into the country unexpectedly, and, after having conquered it without much difficulty, had maintained themselves there for more than four centuries. They were called the Hyksos, that is, the *shepherd kings*. At last, about the year 1660 B.C., Upper Egypt rose against them, under the leadership of King Amosis, and succeeded in regaining its freedom; but Lower Egypt long remained in their power. On the eastern bank of the Nile the Hyksos had built themselves a fortified camp, in which they placed their possessions in safety, and from which they ruled the Delta. At last King Thutmosis undertook the siege of this fortress, but he was obliged to consent to a treaty by which the Hyksos, with a force of two hundred and forty thousand fighting men, went off to Syria. The site of this camp was called Avaris [that is, *Hebrews* (?)], and afterwards Pelusium [that is, *Philistines* (?)]. By the year 1580 B.C. Egypt was once more free. So, at least, several scholars have read the old monu-

[1] Genesis xlvii. 17.

ments of Egypt; but much of all this is uncertain, and other scholars dispute the justice of this view of the history. It is a fact, however, that the land was oppressed for a considerable time by tribes of Arab shepherds.

It was not unnatural that after this the Egyptians should feel the strongest aversion to all foreigners, and especially to the shepherd tribes that came from the desert of Arabia. The ancestors of the people of Israel were soon to feel this hatred to their cost, as we shall presently see.

Chapter XXIX.

RETROSPECT.

AT the end of our First Book we may well pause for a moment, for it would not be surprising were the picture beginning to swim before the eyes of many of my readers, and were they somewhat at a loss to give a reasonable account of what they have been reading. All these legends that place us in such a strange world, and are sometimes at variance with each other, and sometimes so marvellously woven together that it is almost impossible to keep hold of the thread that is to lead us out of the labyrinth, — all these legends begin at last to get so inextricably confused that we find it impossible to take a general view of them at all. How utterly different the final impression one retains as a child, when, with no deep thought on the matter, and content with any kind of solution of the difficulties that arise, one drinks in the stories of the first human generations and of the patriarchs, — delighting in them, more because they feed the imagination and work upon the feelings than because they are good for the heart or head!

Let us cast a glance backward then, that, while each of the stories still speaks for itself, we may take a general view of the whole.

The first point that excites our attention is the extraordinary manner in which the book of Genesis is put together! We cannot help asking, "How could sensible men by any possibility write such a book?" For what is it that we have observed? That this book is made up of portions of at least three works. First of all, to begin with the latest, there was a "Book of Origins," from which, however, but few of the

stories were borrowed. The first account of the creation and Adam's family register formed a part of it. And it also contained an account of the deluge and of God's covenant with the rescued persons, followed by a family register from Noah down to Abraham. But there was not much about the patriarchs in it. The migration of Terah to Canaan, the covenant of God Almighty (El Shaddai) with Abraham, the institution of circumcision, the birth of Isaac, the purchase of the cave of Machpelah, a summary of Ishmael's descendants, the birth of Esau and Jacob, a short account of Jacob's stay with Laban and the mention of the separation of Isaac's two sons, one of whom went to Seir while the other stayed in Canaan, a list of Esau's descendants, the migration of Jacob and his family to Egypt, the adoption of Ephraim and Manasseh by their grandfather, as his own children, and the burial of the latter at Hebron, — this is almost all. It is little more than a short epitome of the contents of the traditions current during the writer's lifetime, and does but serve as the introduction to a rather extensive work; for, though we have already gone through Genesis, we have not taken our leave of the "Book of Origins" yet. On the contrary, we have still to examine its most important sections. Not only are some of the biblical accounts of Moses borrowed from this book, but we shall also find an elaborate system of Israelite law in it, together with a description of the Mosaic religion, according to the writer's idea of it. His review of the fortunes of the generations before Moses is a very suitable introduction to the rest, for he shows us how preparations for the Mosaic religion were gradually made; how God revealed himself to the early generations, not as Yahweh, but as "God" or "God-almighty;" and how certain commandments, such as the abstinence from blood and the circumcision, had been given to Israel already, before God made his law completely known by Moses. We shall return to this subject in our Fourth Book.

If we remove from the book of Genesis all the stories drawn from the "Book of Origins," and leave out of consideration the alterations introduced by the Redactor (that is, the man who made up a single whole out of the older works), we have still a collection of legends which were written by at least two authors, whose accounts, especially in the stories of Jacob and Joseph, are often opposed to one another, but yet are so woven together that it is exceedingly difficult to separate them and read each of them straight through by itself. One writer, whose hand we

can trace all through the book, from the story of Paradise down to Joseph's death, ascribes Mosaic usages quite freely to pre-Mosaic antiquity, whereas another never lets these early generations speak of Yahweh or offer sacrifices, but on the other hand represents them as raising anointed stones, a practice which the patriarchs never followed, according to the former writer. There are many reasons for suspecting that this writer, who avoids the name of Yahweh (he is sometimes called *the older Elohist*, because, like the later "Book of Origins," he always speaks of *Elohim*, "God"), was an Ephraimite, while the other (the Yahwist) lived in Judah. We shall meet with both these writers again in our Second Book.

We have now given a slight sketch of the way in which Genesis was probably put together. I say "probably," for I have made no attempt, either here or in speaking of the separate stories, to conceal the fact that it is very difficult to arrive at certainty upon every point. No doubt my readers have sometimes become quite perplexed in listening to these legends so strangely fused together and worked up into a single whole, and now and then the scholars who are trying to separate the whole into its parts feel just the same confusion. Since the middle of the last century, when a French physician published a book to show that Genesis is made up of different fragments, many Biblical scholars have devoted their powers to this question, and though great progress has been made already, we are not at the end of our labors yet.

Many of my readers may be ready to cry out at this point, "How could the Redactor of Genesis possibly go to work in such an extraordinary manner? Why did he so often retain the very words of the old documents, even when they contradicted each other?" No doubt it is strange: — so strange indeed that we can quite understand the ridicule which some people throw upon the idea that the book of Genesis was really produced in this manner. And yet this opinion is no mere idle theory, but is forced upon us by the work itself; for the repetitions and contradictions it contains cannot be explained in any other way. To take a single example, no one who reads the first chapters of Genesis in an unprejudiced spirit can fail to see that two accounts of the creation stand over against each other there; and in the sequel too, we have numerous examples, from the history of Jacob for instance, that speak unmistakably enough. It certainly does show a want of thought

on the part of the Redactor, but his case by no means stands alone. We shall notice a similar phenomenon in other books of the Old Testament, especially in Exodus, Samuel, and Kings. Moreover, the students of other branches of Oriental Literature tell us of the same thing. The Arabian historians go to work in the same way. There is an old chronicle, for instance, called the chronicle of Tabari, which is nothing but a collection of traditions, strung together without the least pretence of criticism, full of repetitions, contradictions, and impossibilities. Other writers have drawn from this work; that is to say they have given us the same narrative but have altered a little here and there, removed some of the contradictions and omitted some of the most hopelessly improbable stories; but have also inserted words of a far later date. Lastly, one writer, of somewhat higher culture, who has a definite plan, and may be compared in this respect to the writer of the "Book of Origins," uses only so much of the traditionary matter as he requires for his purpose, and makes it into a single whole. But in most cases there is a total absence of all criticism.

Where facts speak we must yield to them, even if we cannot explain them. However strange it may seem, then, we must admit that Genesis, like many other books of the Bible, was put together in this extraordinary manner.

Of the origin and the earliest history of the Israelites, and the tribes related to them, we know, in spite of all the stories furnished us by the book of Genesis, sadly too little. Before Moses, indeed, the Israelites had no history, properly so called.[1] All that we know of their fortunes, and of those of the people with whom they were brought into contact, comes to this: —

A number of Semitic tribes of Arphaxad began, in primeval times, to cross the river Euphrates, and passing onward towards the south-west, pushed into the district that lies between the Mediterranean Sea, the Euphrates, the Persian Gulf, and Egypt. The greater portion of these wandering hordes, the Joktanites, passed into Arabia. Here they gradually established themselves; but we have no means of knowing whom they found already living there. As to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, west of the Jordan, and the district on the east bank of this river, we have, on the other hand, reason to believe that it was inhabited about sixteen

[1] See pp. 97–99.

centuries before Christ by the Rephaites and Anakites in Canaan, the Horites in what was afterwards Edom, the Zamzummites in the land of Ammon, and the Emites in that of Moab. These tribes long survived, as races of giants, in the imagination of the Israelites, even after the conquest by Joshua.

The Semitic tribes that penetrated in those early ages from the other side of the great river into this district by the sea-shore fought for life and death, of course, with the wild aborigines (earliest population), and the result showed that the invaders were the most powerful. They were afterwards called Canaanites, that is, *Lowlanders*, and consisted of various tribes, such as the Sidonians, the Tyrians, the Avvites, and the Amorites. They gradually settled first in Sidon and then elsewhere, and not only expelled the ancient inhabitants, but before long began to fight for possession with one another. For all these tribes did not come at the same time; and it was long before the stream of immigration was stayed. There was a constant forward and backward movement — a succession of efforts to gain a country. Other "men from the farther side" (Hebrews) followed those that had first arrived; and even of this rear-guard, of the continuous migrations of centuries, one section was more successful than another. "The sons of Lot" soon found a dwelling-place east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea; "the sons of Esau" established themselves on the mountains between this sea and the Gulf of Elath; the Ishmaelites wandered out eastward into the desert; others, "the sons of Keturah," penetrated southward and took possession of a portion of Arabia; and some turned towards Egypt and settled in the district east of the Delta. They were not the first of their race with whom the Egyptians had made acquaintance. They had still a lively recollection of all the misery they had suffered from those shepherd tribes of Asia, the Hyksos, and all the difficulty they had had in getting rid of them; but however strong their aversion was, they were obliged to put up with the presence of these shepherds on their border lands. Never since the days of Thutmosis, probably, had they been altogether rid of these hated neighbors, who certainly wandered backwards and forwards after their expulsion from Egypt, endeavoring to penetrate into Canaan again, or contenting themselves with the desert of Arabia, and repeatedly coming into collision with other tribes from across the Euphrates.

Who knows how many of the forefathers of the Hebrews who pastured their flocks in Goshen about 1400 B.C. may have belonged to the former oppressors of Egypt? The Hebrews themselves, however, had preserved no recollection of anything of the kind. This much alone is certain, that the social condition of the land between the Euphrates and Egypt fourteen centuries before Christ was in a veritable chaos. All kinds of Semitic tribes clashed together there, and fought for a settled home against each other and the fierce tribes of older inhabitants. It was a struggle for life. From some of these tribes, then settled in the land of Goshen, the people of Israel sprang.

The history of Israel, then, begins with Moses. Before his time there did indeed exist certain uncultivated shepherd-tribes, capable, as the result showed, of great things; but it was impossible to see what would become of them. Moses, by his mighty personality, moulded these rude tribes into something higher, and laid the foundations of a national existence amongst them, while stamping the impress of his own spirit upon their union. But "one sows and another reaps." He who lays the foundations of a national existence does not live to see the nation. Not years, but centuries must pass away before the national unity was really established, and from the Hebrew shepherds that inhabited the land of Goshen fourteen centuries before Christ, a nation had been formed with its own special character and its own special mission. This only came about in the age of David, and his accession to the throne, therefore, is a turning-point in the history of Israel.

In describing this second period we would gladly stand entirely upon historical ground, but it is impossible that our wish to do so should be fulfilled. We shall still meet with a host of legends, and with regard to the fortunes of Moses and his contemporaries, for instance, we shall have to content ourselves with the knowledge of one or two particulars. But the main lines of Israelite history are clear, many facts are established, and, most important of all, several of the chief actors in the history are known to us as individuals. From the darkness then we are coming into the twilight. We can distinguish several great personalities clearly. And, when we look closely, we gradually see a most intensely interesting spectacle rising more and more distinctly into view; — it is the birth of a nation!

Book II.

FROM MOSES TO DAVID.

Chapter I.

THE YOUTH OF MOSES.

Ex. I. 1.–II. 22.

At the head of Israel's history stands the mighty figure of Moses. He lived in times when his people were as yet in a state of barbarism, and for many centuries afterwards no historian appeared amongst them; so it is not surprising that we know but little of his life. Legend plays a greater part than history in the accounts which we possess of him, and it is impossible to give a sketch of his life and character which we can confidently declare to be true. But Israel never lost the memory of the man who was considered the spiritual father of his people. A grateful posterity named him — and to a large extent with justice — the founder of Israel's national existence and of the worship of Yahweh. As such, then, he may claim a place of honor amongst the men whose lives have moulded the history of the world.

The book of Exodus opens with an account of his birth and early life, which runs as follows: —

The youth of Moses fell in evil days, for his people were in great distress, on account of the fear with which they were regarded by the Egyptian king. Nor was the monarch's alarm without good cause, for after the death of Joseph and his generation, the posterity of Jacob multiplied beyond measure, so that they filled the land. Now the king under whom Joseph had served as viceroy was dead, and his successor, who knew nothing of Joseph's services to Egypt, looked upon this increase in the number of the Hebrews with great anxiety. So

THE

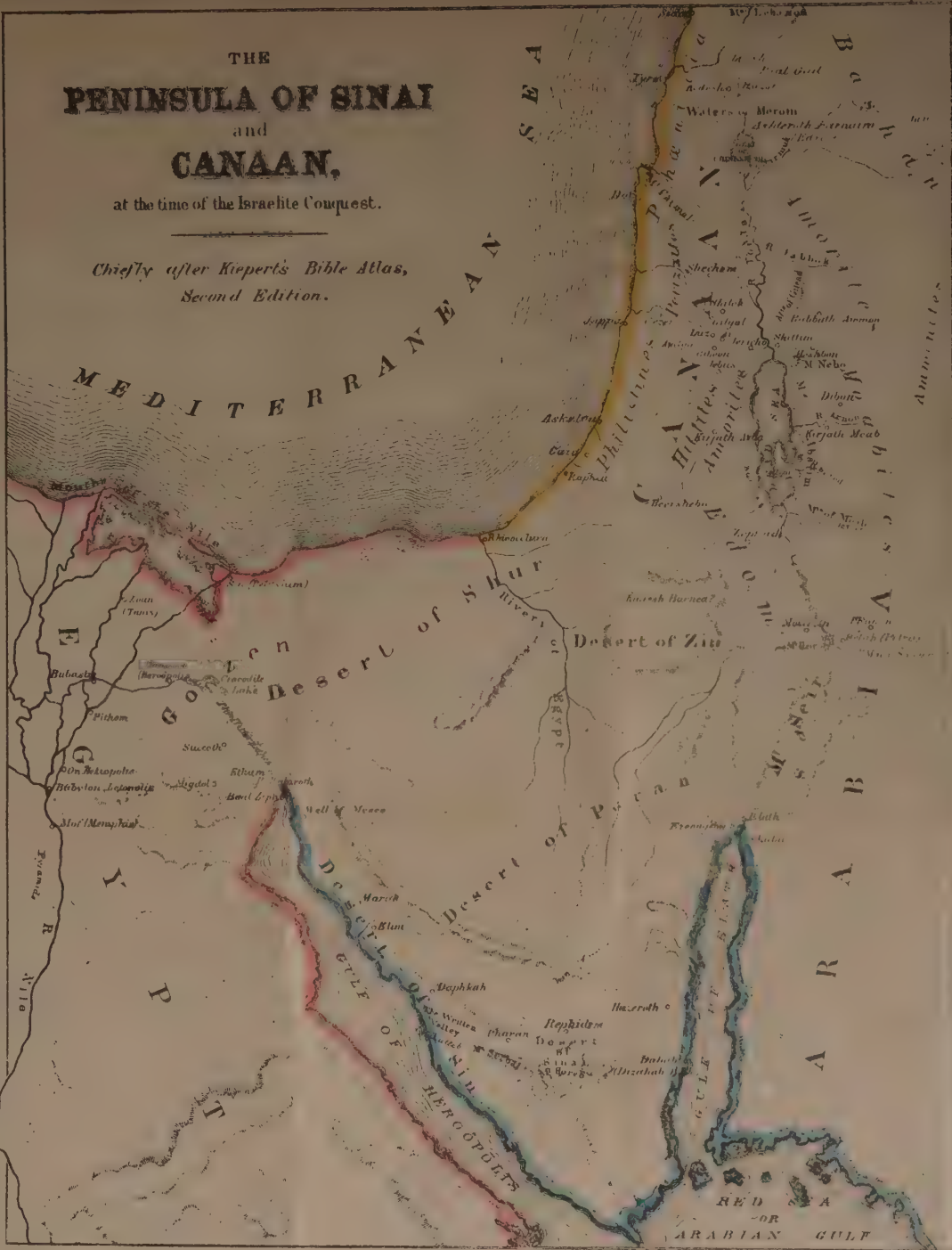
PENINSULA OF SINAI

and

CANAAN,

at the time of the Israelite Conquest.

Chiefly after Kiepert's Bible Atlas, Second Edition.



he said to his advisers: "See how numerous these tribes have grown. Nay, they are more powerful than we are ourselves. We must take steps to prevent their increasing still more; or else, when war breaks out, they will take the side of our enemies, and at last, after turning their arms against us, leave the country altogether." So the Egyptians began systematically to oppress the Israelites. All kinds of toil were forced upon them. For instance, they were compelled to build two fortresses, Pithom and Ramses, in Goshen, the district in which most of them lived. A hateful task! For the sole object of these fortresses was to keep them down, and to prevent their kindred tribes of the desert from coming to their rescue. They were compelled to perform other kinds of servile work as well, and in some places heavy labor in the fields was required of them. Thus the Egyptians oppressed them out of fear; but the more they oppressed them the more rapidly did they multiply.

Then the king bethought him of another and more cruel plan. He ordered the Hebrew nurses to kill all the male children as soon as they were born. But the nurses — all honor to them! God gave them a numerous posterity as a reward! may the names of Siphrah and Puah never be forgotten by the sons of Israel! — the nurses would not lend a hand to the king in the execution of this treacherous design, so the project of the tyrant came to nothing.

Next came a still more fearful decree. The Egyptians received orders to slay the children of the Hebrews. The girls they might suffer to live, but the boys must be thrown without pity into the Nile.

It was in this time of misery that a woman of the tribe of Levi — another writer tells us that her name was Jochebed — whose husband belonged to the same tribe, brought a son into the world. She could not bear to think of it being killed, it was such a splendid child. It was true she ran fearful risks by keeping it concealed, but for three months she persevered. Then some way the secret oozed out, and still striving to do what could be done towards rescuing her child, she wove a basket of papyrus, made it as water-tight as she could, laid her little baby in it, and then put it among the bulrushes on the banks of the river. Who could tell? God had power to save the little one! His sister — she is called Miriam elsewhere — was to stand some way off, but to keep her eye upon the basket with such a precious treasure in it, to see what would become of it.

She had not been watching long when, behold! the king's daughter, with all her train of slaves, came to bathe in the Nile. It so happened that the basket among the bulrushes caught her eye, and she sent one of her attendants to fetch it; and when they opened it they saw the child lying there and wailing bitterly. The tender-hearted princess was moved with pity, and exclaimed: "Surely it must be some Hebrew child." Then Miriam came up and said: "Shall I find you a Hebrew nurse to suckle it for you?" And when the princess showed by her consent that she intended to keep the child alive, Miriam hastened to her mother with the glorious news. We may think how joyfully the mother obeyed the summons of the king's daughter.

What a strange scene it was! There lay the baby crying for food, and his mother, yearning all the while to lay him to her breast, stood by as if she were a stranger, without daring to betray how much better her right to the child was than the princess's! "Will you take this little one with you and suckle it? I will pay you if you will," said the princess. How Jochebed longed to cry out to her: "The gods of my people and the gods of your fathers reward you for taking pity on this slave-child!" But she must restrain herself. She agreed to the wages offered, and took her own child with her, as if she were an hireling. So Moses was brought up in the house of his parents during his early years, and his first impressions were derived from amongst his own people.

But when he grew older and could do without the first care of a mother, Jochebed had to take him to the king's daughter again. She did it with a bleeding heart. What would become of him now! No doubt the princess would take good care of him and have him well taught. The great Egyptian lady could do everything for him far better than his own mother could have done. But there was one great danger. Would not the child, with his courtly education, learn to despise his own people! Would he not become an Egyptian, every inch of him! Would not his position make him forget his origin? She feared it would be so.

The princess did not do her good work by halves. When the boy was brought to her she called him Moses, *i.e.*, *the drawn*, "for," she said, "I have *drawn* him out of the water;" and she did not bring him up as a slave, but as if he were her own son. So it seemed likely enough that he would forget his Hebrew origin, or would feel ashamed whenever it came into his mind.

But it was not so. The voice of nature cried aloud within him, and he was too noble to deny his kinsmen. In spite of his Egyptian education, in spite of the contempt with which his countrymen were regarded by those amongst whom he lived, in spite of his own high rank, he was still a Hebrew at heart. And so he was deeply troubled by the sad condition of his own people. His blood would boil in his veins when he heard at court how they sported with their lives; how thousands of them were driven to the most exhausting toil — the building of pyramids, palaces, temples, or fortresses; how the news that this or that number of them had again perished from heat and weariness, thirst and hunger, was received at court with perfect indifference, and only raised a question as to the best way of bringing up another batch to take the places of those that had perished, without its being necessary to stop the work. And he shuddered to think how many of his kinsmen were banished, for resisting orders, to those stone quarries from which death was only a release.

He could not bear it long. Hardly had he grown up and begun to feel his strength, when the places where his kinsmen were driven to their servile tasks drew him more and more irresistibly to them. He saw them panting under their burdens; he heard the swish of the driver's lash as it fell upon them; he must stand by and see them fall to the ground in exhaustion, disease, and death — others at once taking their places only to meet the same fate at last. He heard them murmuring over their misery, cursing their oppressors, praying for deliverance. Should he not —? Nay! what could he do? It was utterly out of his power to release them; and were he to betray any symptom of all that was going on in his heart, it would simply bring him into the utmost danger, without doing them the smallest good. Yet, was not he too a Hebrew? By birth he was; but Egypt was a second fatherland, the princess a second mother to him. If he was patient, it might be that hereafter, when he had risen to power and distinction, he might take up the cause of his people and succeed in lightening their yoke. That would be much more sensible than to stand by them now. He must wait then. He must close his eyes to their misery and his ears to their cry.

But yet he felt himself drawn irresistibly to the scenes of the Hebrews' sufferings — dangerous spots for one in his present frame of mind. If he was really to be patient he must keep far away, or it would be impossible for him in the end

to hold himself in check. It was impossible. He is standing at a solitary spot, not far from one of the scenes of toil. A Hebrew, one of his kinsfolk, sits down there to rest a moment, for all his strength is gone. But one of the drivers has spied him out. "How the lazy rascal is dawdling! This is no time for resting. If he breaks down under his burden, it is but a small matter, for another can take his place. There is no stint of the villains. To your task there!" The lash is raised. It falls with a sharp, cruel sound. But it does not bite the exhausted slave more fiercely than the tender-hearted man who sees it, and has seen the like so often. All his prudence is scattered to the winds. His wealth, his honors, his prospects, are as nothing to him. He, too, is a Hebrew, and he feels the blow as if it had been laid upon himself. A glance to the right — a glance to the left. No one is in sight. His sword has leapt from its scabbard; a momentary gleam, and the Egyptian falls! No one has seen the deed except the rescued Hebrew, and surely he will not betray his deliverer. The corpse of the slaughtered man is hurriedly covered with sand.

A host of thoughts and questions crowded through the brain of Moses. If the Hebrews were all at one; if they rose together against their oppressors; if each of them did what he himself had done; could not they rescue themselves? If they would listen to him, and put themselves under his guidance, might he not succeed in —? His heart beats high at the thought. He feels that he is called to some great task.

But a bitter disappointment awaits him. On the following day he is once more at the same spot. Again he witnesses a sight that grieves him. Two of his fellow-tribesmen are quarrelling with each other. At any rate this must not go on. Unity alone gives strength. He goes at once to the one who is evidently in the wrong, and asks: "Why are you striking him?" But what is his dismay on hearing the answer: "Well! What business is it of yours? Who has made you our judge and leader? Perhaps you mean to kill me as you did the Egyptian!" What! Was his deed already known? The man he had delivered had told all about it, and yet it had not been the signal of revolt to his tribesmen. Were they ungrateful, then? Had they no love of freedom?

Alas! Moses knew little of the heart of a slave. Hereafter he was destined to learn only too much of it.

He soon discovered that news of his bold deed had reached the ears of the king, and that orders had been given for him to be seized and put to death; so he took flight at once, and passed through the peninsula of Sinai to Midian. The inhabitants of this region were related to the Hebrews, so he hoped to find a dwelling-place amongst them.

Fortune favored him; for as he was sitting by the well of the district, the seven daughters of Reuel, the priest of the Midianites, came to water their flocks; but just at the same moment some of the neighboring shepherds came up to drive them away. Then the same chivalrous instinct which had led Moses to take the part of his oppressed tribesmen urged him to defend these sorely harassed maidens. The selfish shepherds soon saw how bold a champion the priest's daughters had found, and kept their distance, while Moses watered the maidens' flocks. It was not the first time that the girls had had to suffer from the violence of the other owners of the well; nay, it was such a common occurrence that Reuel was quite surprised to see his daughters back so soon. When they told him all that had taken place, he reproved them for having been so inhospitable as not to ask the Egyptian home, and hastened to make up for their neglect.

With Reuel Moses found no mere resting-place for the day, but another home; and when he had married Zipporah (one of Reuel's daughters) he felt himself united to his new surroundings by the tenderest ties.

It is an undoubted fact that the ancestors of the Israelites were oppressed by the Egyptians; and it is but natural, therefore, that our first inquiries should be: How long did this period of oppression last? and, When did it cease? We may look for light in two directions, and ask: What did the Israelites say about it? and, Have the Egyptians preserved any recollections of it? The answer is not easily given. The traditions of the Israelites differ widely from each other, and so deserve but little confidence. In one place[1] we are distinctly informed that the Israelites left Egypt four hundred and eighty years before the building of Solomon's Temple; and elsewhere[2] that the slavery lasted four hundred years, and the whole sojourn in Egypt four hundred and thirty years. But then, again, there are other accounts, according to which the Israelites returned to Canaan as soon as the fourth generation after their settle-

[1] 1 Kings vi. 1. [2] Genesis xv. 13. Exodus xii. 40.

ment in Egypt.[1] Now four hundred and eighty is obviously a round number, and stands for the lifetime of twelve generations, each generation being put at forty years, which is certainly too high. We have already[2] seen that the number four hundred and thirty was also obtained artificially. The narrative in Exodus implies that the oppression did not last long, for it began as soon as the generation of Joseph had passed away, and a king who had not known him sat upon the throne.[3] It was in this king's reign that Moses was born, and under his successor[4] that the Hebrews left Egypt. Moreover, it is in itself very unlikely that the slavery lasted long. Had it done so, it would have succeeded in its object, and completely broken the independent spirit of the Hebrews.

As to the Egyptian accounts, they are borrowed chiefly from the work of an Egyptian priest, called Manetho, who compiled a history of his people, from ancient authorities, about the year 250 B.C. The work itself is lost, but Josephus and others give us fragments of it. These extracts tell us something of the sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, and possibly, though this is very uncertain, of their departure from it. The opinions of the learned as to the succession of the Egyptian kings and the length of their reigns also rest to a large extent upon the same authority.

We have also gained some light from deciphering the inscriptions upon pyramids, palaces, obelisks, and temples; though it is only in the present century that scholars have taken this work in hand. In 1799, on the occasion of Napoleon's expedition against Egypt, a stone was discovered at Rosetta, upon which there was one inscription written in three languages, — the hieroglyphic character, the demotic or popular Egyptian character, and the Greek. This discovery laid the foundations of the art of deciphering the ancient inscriptions. Silvestre de Sacy made some progress, and since his time the two Champollions, Lepsius, Rosellini, Bunsen, and Brugsch, amongst others, have rendered valuable services upon this field of study. But although the hoary past of Egypt is being gradually unveiled by the labors of the learned, the task is surrounded by many difficulties, and the work proceeds but slowly.

It is no wonder, then, that with regard to the question we are now considering we find students of the subject disagreeing, and are therefore unable to lay down anything as certain.

[1] Genesis xv. 16; cf. p. 122. Exodus vi. 16–18, 20, &c.
[2] P. 65. [3] Exodus i. 8. [4] Exodus ii. 23.

But the following conclusion is constantly gaining a more and more unanimous support: —

When, about 1580 B.C., King Thutmosis III. had expelled the Hyksos from Egypt,[1] the country rapidly rose in prosperity and power. As the emancipation had proceeded from Upper Egypt, the Pharaohs chose Thebes, instead of Memphis, as their seat; and there they built their magnificent temples and palaces. They turned their weapons successfully against the inhabitants of the valley of the Higher Nile, and Amenophis III. (about 1500) built a temple to his own godhead there.[2] None of the kings, however, could rival the fame of Sethos and his son Ramses, the former of whom reigned for fifty-one years (1445–1394), and the latter for sixty-six (1394–1328). They triumphed in various wars over their enemies, amongst others the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and raised many monuments of extraordinary magnificence. The number of their captives of war was so great that, as a Greek writer assures us, they had no need to exact servile labor from a single Egyptian. This king, Ramses II. (Miamun, as he is called in the inscriptions, or Sesostris, as the Greeks named him), was probably the oppressor of the Hebrew tribes who pastured their flocks in the land of Goshen. One of the cities which the Israelites were compelled to build was accordingly called Ramses.[3] This Ramses the Great was succeeded by his son Menephthah, who reigned nineteen or twenty years; and it was in his reign, between the years 1328 and 1309 that is, that the Israelites departed from Egypt.

Here we may leave the matter for the present to return to the story of the youth of Moses, though we shall have to go back to the history of Egypt presently.

"The youth of Moses" is certainly not a correct title for this chapter, if it is true that the hero was eighty years old[4] when he began to emancipate his people; for, in that case, even if we admit the statement of an early Christian writer,[5] that he spent forty years with his father-in-law, still he was no longer in his youth when he fled to Midian. But this statement as to the age of Moses has a very suspicious look. We shall often find *forty* used as a round number to signify a longish period; and the story in Exodus says distinctly,[6] "And it came to pass when Moses grew up that he went out

[1] See p. 235.
[2] See p. 232.
[3] Exodus i. 11.
[4] Exodus vii. 7.
[5] Acts vii. 30.
[6] Exodus ii. 11.

to look upon his brethren, and saw an Egyptian strike one of his kinsmen."

When we examine the story of the youth of Moses closely, we very soon see that it is a legend. Imagine a people so powerful as to excite the fear of the Egyptians, and yet only having two midwives, who were consequently in a position to check the increase of the whole race! It is as inconceivable as the order to drown all the male children. It is evident what gave occasion to the invention of the story. It was the belief that the birth of a great man must be marked by something extraordinary. The name Moses, too, which is derived from a Hebrew word, signifying "to draw," played an important part in the formation of the story. The writer fell into an obvious mistake in making the Egyptian princess, who surely did not speak Hebrew, give him this name. Attempts have therefore been made, even in ancient times, to show that the name of Moses is derived from two Egyptian words which mean "water" and "to draw;" but even if this were possible it would simply be an accidental coincidence, for it is evidently the Hebrew word to which our writer refers in his explanation of the name.

Although he gives us a detailed account of the early days of Moses, yet he never tells us the names of his parents. They were evidently unknown to tradition. The "Book of Origins,"[1] however, calls his father Amram, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, and his mother Jochebed, Amram's aunt, and a daughter of Levi.

Our legend contrasts favorably in many respects with the florid description of the youth of Moses which Josephus gives his readers. It is astonishing to see how much he has to tell us about it. The main features of his narrative are as follows: The Egyptian king, who made the Hebrews work as slaves because his own people were lazy and were jealous of the prosperity of these strangers, heard a prophecy that about that time a child would be born among the Hebrews who would humble the power of Egypt, deliver his own people, and be celebrated all over the world for his wonderful valor. In order to prevent its coming to pass, the king gave orders that all the Hebrew boys that were born should be drowned, and for fear the babies might be hidden by their parents he ordered that Egyptian midwives should attend the Hebrew women. Now when Amram's wife was expecting to become a mother, her husband prayed to God for help, and God told him that

[1] Exodus vi. 16, 18.

his child would be the promised deliverer. When the baby was born its parents hid it for three months; but then Amram began to be afraid that he might be found out, and that in that case both he himself and the child would be killed, and God's promise brought to nothing. So he thought it better to trust entirely to the promise rather than his own efforts to hide the child, for God would doubtless find means of making good his word.

This is a curious example of the way in which the determination to defend anybody's conduct, at all costs, leads a man into every kind of obliquity. What we call the result of fear becomes with Josephus the fruit of trust in God! It is surely nearer the mark to think it a proof of faith in the child's parents that they did venture to hide him for three months, and this is the view taken by a Christian writer of the Apostolic age.[1]

But to return to the story of Josephus.

The parents of Moses now laid the child in a little chest made of papyrus, and let it float down the Nile while Miriam, their daughter, followed it along the bank to see where it would rest. Thus God showed how powerless is all the wisdom of man, and that they who selfishly attempt the destruction of others (referring, no doubt, to the king), fail in their efforts, while those, on the other hand, who run into danger in obedience to God's will, are rescued from it, even against all hope. For Thermouthis, the king's only child, found the little one, was delighted by its size and beauty, and determined to keep it alive. But it was in vain that the Egyptian women laid it to their breasts. It would not let them feed it. The princess and her attendants were at a loss what to do, but Miriam came up and said that the Egyptian women were but losing their labor, though perhaps the child would let a Hebrew woman feed it. On this Miriam was commissioned by the princess to go and find a Hebrew woman, and of course she brought her mother.

Now the Egyptians call water "mo," and one rescued "ises," so that Moses signifies "one rescued from the water." The boy grew up most wonderfully, excelling all around him both in mind and body. He was so beautiful that when he was three years old people stood still in the streets to look at him, and so fascinating that they could not take their eyes off him.

Thermothis, who had no children of her own, adopted

[1] Hebrews xi. 23.

him, and presented him to her father, begging him to name him as his successor if she should not have a child herself. The king took the child in his arms, to please his daughter, pressed him to his bosom, and playfully set the crown upon his head. But Moses flung it to the ground and trampled on it. This seemed a bad omen, and just at that moment came in the very priest who had prophesied before that a boy would be born destined to rescue the Israelites to the cost of the Egyptians. He cried out, "O king! this is the child! Kill it on the spot." But Thermouthis managed to save him, and educated him with the greatest care, and had him taught all the sciences.

When Moses was grown up he rendered the Egyptians an important service. The Ethiopians had made an inroad upon them, and had penetrated as far as Memphis. The Egyptians were at their wits' end, and went to consult their gods, who told them to call in the help of the Hebrew, whereupon the king requested his daughter to send him Moses. She consented, after her father had taken an oath to do him no harm, and reproachfully asked the priests whether they were not ashamed of calling for the help of one against whose life they had plotted. Egyptians and Hebrews alike rejoiced, though for very different reasons, that Moses had been chosen as general; and he did not disappoint their expectations, but defeated the Ethiopians, and finally married Tharbis, the daughter of their king.

But when the Egyptians, repaying his service with ingratitude, endeavored to put him out of the way, he fled to Midian, where he was hospitably received by Reuel.

Some of these particulars about the birth and youth of Moses are evidently invented by Josephus himself, while others were already current amongst the people in his time. In the same way various additions to the Biblical story about Moses are to be found in other writers, both Christian and Jewish, after the beginning of our era.[1]

A comparison of the story in Exodus with this account of the events by Josephus is altogether favorable to the former. Not only is it delightfully simple, while the other is gaudy and overloaded, but, singularly enough, while Josephus praises Moses extravagantly for his wonderful beauty, valor, and skill in warfare, delights to enlarge on his fame and power, and mentions the opportunities he enjoyed for gaining knowledge, he omits the one really noble feature in the character of Moses

[1] *E.g.*, Acts vii. 23.

as sketched in Exodus. For, according to Josephus, he has to flee simply because the king is afraid of him, not at all because he has taken the part of his unhappy tribesmen. Worldly men place a high value upon all that glitters, upon all earthly greatness. With men of a spiritual type, on the other hand, the highest privileges of such a nature do not weigh against one single deed of virtue. Worldly men, therefore delight in speaking of riches, beauty, and honor. Spiritual men dwell rather upon traits of moral grandeur. Josephus passes over both the courage of the midwives and the self-sacrifice of Moses. The writer of Exodus, on the other hand, only mentions the beauty of Moses in passing, and fixes our attention on his brilliant prospects only in so far as this was necessary, to show us how much he sacrificed for his people's sake. This proves that he knew the worth of moral greatness.

But are we to praise Moses for that deed of violence? Did he not commit a murder when he slew the Egyptian? and must we ever speak of such an action with approval? This question certainly never entered the head of the writer of Exodus. Murder was indeed considered a sin in Israel; but a human life was much less highly prized in ancient times than is now the case. At a time when it was considered the duty of the relative of a murdered man to exact vengeance for him with his own hand and slay his murderer, no one would dream of condemning a man for leaping to the rescue of his own flesh and blood and slaying a stranger. But to us, who have learned to value every human life so highly, the question does arise: Is the action of Moses in all respects worthy of approbation? And we cannot but answer: No; a murder is never to be commended! The end never justifies the means! Even if the noblest motives urge a man to strike another dead, yet, if his conscience be sound, he must sooner or later repent. A murder, even if no human judge can punish us; nay, even though half the world should rise up to thank us for it; a murder, committed in self-defence or to rescue a neighbor, still contaminates us and makes us unclean in the sight of God. But there are circumstances under which the noble impulses of the heart can only speak in deeds of violence or even bloodshed! The warrior who, burning with love for his fatherland, strikes down the foe, is stained in the sight of God; and, if he has a feeling heart, he shrinks from himself in after times when he thinks of what he has done. Yet he stands

far, far above the coward, caring for nothing but his own security, who sneaks away and keeps quiet, leaving his fatherland to its fate. In the same way, though we cannot commend Moses for the murder he committed, yet the feelings that inspired him at that moment do deserve the highest praise. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews dwells with fine perception upon this point when he says:[1] "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."

Honor to the man who takes the part of the weak — who risks his own interests for those of his neighbor — who "endures as seeing the Invisible!"[2] While he loses all earthly reward and throws away a crown, he gains a glory greater than the treasures of Egypt.

Chapter II.

MOSES IN MIDIAN.

Ex. III. 1–IV. 28.

THE place which the Israelite biographers of Moses called "the land of Midian" lies, in all probability, south-east of Horeb, in the southern portion of the Sinaitic peninsula. Greek geographers, who visited these regions in the second century before Christ, found, on the shore of the Elanite gulf, a grove of palm-trees and a plentiful supply of water, valued all the more highly on account of the dryness of the country round. The office of priest at the sacred grove was filled by a man and woman, who were clothed in the hides of animals, ate the fruit of the palms, and slept in huts built upon the trunks of the trees, for fear of beasts of prey. They were consecrated to the priesthood for life, and knew by tradition that their ancestors had filled the same office time out of mind. A great feast was celebrated in the grove every five years, and on these occasions well-fed camels were sacrificed to the gods, and the frequenters of the festival took water home with them from the well, believing it to possess

[1] Hebrews xi. 24, 25. [2] Hebrews xi. 27.

healing powers. To this very day there is a harbor in the neighborhood called "the harbor of the well," near which may still be seen a well and an old funereal monument which the Bedouins and sea-men hold in high honor, and to which they make all kinds of offerings. Here we imagine Reuel, "the priest of Midian," as he is always called, to have dwelt. The name Reuel, however, only occurs twice.[1] Everywhere else that of Jether or Jethro is substituted. Perhaps this was originally a title signifying "chief" or something of the kind, and has been taken for a proper name by mistake.

We are not told by the narrators in Exodus how long Moses dwelt in Midian; but they give us a detailed account of the close of his sojourn there. It runs as follows: —

Moses used to tend the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; and once, when he was pasturing them near Horeb, the mountain of God, he witnessed a most extraordinary sight. He saw a bramble-bush all in flames, but however fiercely the fire burned, the sprays and leaves of the bush were not consumed. So strange a sight drew Moses to the spot, to try to find out how it was that the shrub was not destroyed; but, prepared as he was for something out of the common course of events, he was far from thinking of any such glorious revelation as he was actually to receive. For the fiery glow was nothing less than the token of Yahweh's presence; and when the deity perceived that Moses turned aside to the flame, he cried out to him: "Moses! Moses!" Filled with amazement and awe, Moses stood still, and, declaring his readiness to receive the message of the deity, answered: "Here am I!" "Come not nearer," was the command, "and take your sandals from off your feet; for the spot whereon you stand is holy ground."

With naked feet, Moses stood still to listen, and veiled his face in terror lest he should see the deity with whom he spoke. His heart trembled when he heard the words: "I am the god of your forefathers, the god of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob." He waited in reverential silence for what should follow, and Yahweh's voice was heard again: "I have seen the misery of my people that is in Egypt, and have heard its cry because it is oppressed. I know how great are its sufferings. Therefore I have come down to deliver it from the hand of the Egyptians, and to lead it to a good and ample land overflowing with milk and honey, the dwelling-place of the tribes of Canaan. Come, then, I have chosen you as

[1] Exodus ii. 18. Numbers x. 29.

my messenger to Pharaoh. Go! and deliver my people from Egypt."

Deeply conscious of his own weakness, Moses was amazed and bewildered by this command, and answered: "Lord! who am I that I should have power to do this thing?" But the answer came back: "I will be with you. When you have brought the people out of Egypt you shall worship me upon this same mountain. Such is the proof that it is I who send you."

Moses now began to familiarize himself with the trust that had been laid upon him, and to weigh its difficulties. "When I go to the Israelites," he said in reply to the deity that addressed him, "and declare that the god of their fathers has sent me to them, then they will say to me, 'what is the name of the god who spoke to you?'" Then God answered, "I am what I am. Tell the Israelites that Yahweh, the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has sent you to them. By this name I will be addressed to all eternity. Go, then! call the elders of the people together, and tell them that Yahweh, the god of the patriarchs, has looked upon them, and upon all they have had to endure in Egypt. Promise them that you will deliver them from the oppression of Egypt, and lead them to the land of the Canaanites. And if they give heed to your words you must go together to the king of Egypt, and say to him that Yahweh, the god of the Hebrews, has met you, and that you desire to go three days' journey into the desert to make sacrifices to him. I know full well," continued Yahweh, "that the Egyptian king will not freely grant the request, but I shall afflict his land with many fearful plagues, which you will see, until he is forced to let you go. And then I shall make the Egyptians feel kindly towards my people, so as not to let them leave the land in poverty; for the Hebrew women must ask their neighbors for gold and silver cups and vessels, and for precious garments, and you must load your sons and daughters with them, and so plunder Egypt."

But Moses was not yet silenced. "Lord!" he said, "what must I do if the Israelites will not believe that Yahweh has revealed himself to me?" This difficulty, like the others, was removed by the deity. He commanded Moses to throw down upon the ground the shepherd's staff which he held in his hand, and then he changed it into a serpent, from which Moses fled in terror, but when he seized it by the tail it changed back again into a stick. Then Yahweh made him put his hand into his bosom, and when he drew it

out it was white as snow with leprosy, and afterwards it was restored to health again. If his tribesmen would not believe that the god of their fathers had appeared to him, he was to convince them by showing them these two wonders. If this was not enough, he was to pour some of the Nile water upon the bank, and it would turn to blood.

Still Moses had a difficulty. "Lord!" he said, "I have not the gift of speech; I never had it, and I have not received it by thy speaking to me." But this was of no account with Yahweh. "Who gave a mouth to man?" he asked the hesitating shepherd; "who makes men dumb or deaf? who causes them to see or to be blind? Is it not I, Yahweh? Go, then, I will be with you, and will teach you what you must say."

Moses had now no further difficulty to urge; but yet he shrank from the task — it was so hard. "Nay, Lord," he cried, "do but send some other!" Then Yahweh answered in a voice of anger: "Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he is eloquent. He will come to meet you and will rejoice when he sees you. You must put the words into his mouth, and I will help you both, and I will tell you what to do. Aaron shall speak to the people for you, and serve as it were for your mouthpiece. Go! and take your magic staff with you."

Then Moses went to Jethro, and asked him to let him go back to Egypt, to see whether his relatives were still alive. When he had received permission he began his journey. On the way, Yahweh said to him: "Remember to do all the wonders, for which I have given you the power, in the presence of Pharaoh. But it will be all in vain, for I shall harden his heart, and he will refuse to let the people go. Then you must say to him: Thus says Yahweh — 'Israel is my son, my firstborn. Let my son go, that he may serve me. If you refuse to do it, I will slay your eldest son.'"

Meanwhile Yahweh had appeared to Aaron also, and had commanded him to go out from Egypt to meet Moses in the desert. At the mount of God he met him, and joyfully embraced and greeted him. Moses told his brother what Yahweh had commanded him, and what wonders he could perform. Then they went to Egypt together.

It cannot be denied that this story is somewhat prolix, though, as given above, it has been freed from several repetitions which make the original still more so. It is obvious, from many passages in the story, that it has been put together from various sources; and this comes out with special clear-

ness towards the end, where, after Moses has already got leave from Jethro to return to Egypt, the following words, strangely enough, occur: "And Yahweh said to Moses in Midian, 'Go! return to Egypt. For all who sought your life are dead.' Then Moses returned to Egypt, taking his wife and his sons with him, upon an ass, with the staff of God in his hand." This is evidently part of a story in which Moses is first called to deliver Israel, when he is already in Egypt, as we afterwards read. In the early chapters in Exodus, in fact, besides the account taken from the "Book of Origins," which knows nothing of the abode of Moses in Midian,[1] we have two other stories agreeing in the main, yet differing from each other in special details, which have been completely mixed up together.

In one important point they disagree: for while the one calls Yahweh the god of the patriarchs, the other represents this name of God as being revealed to Moses on this occasion for the first time. We shall speak hereafter of the origin of the worship of Yahweh, and at present need only make a few remarks as to the pronunciation and signification of the name.[2] At first sight it seems incredible that the Israelites themselves should have forgotten how to pronounce the name of their god. In reality, however, it is very easily explained. In ancient times they only wrote the consonants of their words in inscriptions and books, and so expressed the name of God by the letters Y H W H. Now every Israelite knew quite well how to pronounce these letters; but after the captivity they began to entertain a superstitious fear of this holy name, and to avoid pronouncing it, until at last it was strictly forbidden to utter it. In reading Holy Scripture therefore they generally substituted *Adonai* "lord," but sometimes *Elohim* "god," for this name. Now when the Jewish scholars of a later age added the vowels to the text of the Bible, for fear the pronunciation of Hebrew should be gradually lost, they added the vowels of these words *Adonai* or *Elohim* to the consonants Y H W H, so that Yehowah or Yehowih appears to be written. As the first of these forms occurs by far the most frequently, the name Jehovah has come into use, — simply through the affectation of half-educated students, — though hardly a single translation of repute has committed the blunder.[3]

There is no Jewish tradition, therefore, as to the pronuncia-

[1] Exodus i. 1–12, ii. 23–25, vi. 1–24. [2] See p. 18.

[3] Perhaps our own "Authorized Version," in which "Jehovah" occurs a few times, is the only exception. See p. 18, note.

tion of the proper name of Israel's god. But at a time when the Israelites were still in the habit of pronouncing it, it was picked up by certain foreigners, and therefore occurs in a few Phœnician and Greek inscriptions. These inscriptions, together with the laws of the Hebrew language, show that something like *Yahweh* must have been the pronunciation of the name.

What is the meaning of the name? The writer of Exodus iii. 14, attempts an explanation, and finds the word "I am" in it; but the glimpses we get of the knowledge of languages possessed by the old Israelites inspire us with no great confidence in their derivations; for, as observed already,[1] the explanations of names which occur so frequently in Genesis, for example, are almost all wrong, and are evidently invented just to suit the sound. So, too, in this case the interpretation is in all probability a mistake. It is almost impossible for Yahweh to mean "I am" or even "he is," though the real explanation of the name is uncertain. There is a great deal to be said in favor of the translation "He makes to be" or "The Creator;" and it is much easier to believe that the ancient Israelites expressed this idea in the name of their god, rather than the philosophical conception "he who is." The use of such an exalted name appears especially incongruous in an age when as yet the recognition of God's unity was not even thought of.

In speaking of the legend of the fall of Sodom and Gomorrah, we noticed[2] the wonderful inconsistencies in the idea of Yahweh which the writer had formed. In some respects he was a very exalted being, but in others he stood but little above mankind. Just the same thing is apparent here, and very naturally, since it is probably the work of the same writer that we have before us. On the one hand, Yahweh is a mighty god. He makes man deaf and dumb, or he gives him the power of speech. He makes him blind, or causes him to see. He rules the powers of Nature and can help his servant, so that Pharaoh is compelled to let Israel, Yahweh's eldest son,[3] depart. On the other hand, this same Yahweh reveals himself in a burning bramble-bush, which is, accordingly, regarded as his dwelling-place.[4] Once, it is true, instead of mentioning Yahweh, the writer speaks of his angel,[5] as if he meant that it was not the deity himself, but only one of his messengers, that was manifesting himself. But everywhere else Yahweh him-

[1] See p. 57.
[2] See p. 137.
[3] Compare Hosea xi. 1.
[4] Deuteronomy xxxiii. 16.
[5] Exodus iii. 2.

self is introduced as speaking; and Moses, too, veils his face so as not to see God. It is easier, however, to forgive the writer his narrow conception of Yahweh than the low standard of honor which he attributes to him. Here we have another proof that the ancient Israelites were not very particular about speaking the truth or keeping faith. Yahweh commands Moses to ask Pharaoh's leave for the Hebrews to go three days' journey into the desert to do honor to their god, while his real intention is to take them away from Egypt for good. At the same time he shows Moses how to plunder the land of bondage; every Hebrew woman is to ask her neighbors to lend her gold, silver, and apparel, and Yahweh is to incline the Egyptians to treat the request favorably. Actions for which we have no names except lying and stealing are here attributed to Yahweh. We cannot be surprised, then, that the writer tells us, without a word of disapproval, how Moses deceived his father-in-law by telling him that his object in wishing to go to Egypt was to see whether his relatives were still alive.

The main purpose of the writer was to show us how Moses had been called by Yahweh to deliver Israel from Egypt, and the manner in which he carries it out shows that he understood what is meant by being called of God, and so had something of the spirit of a prophet in him. Let us distinguish clearly between the form and the substance of his story, that we may be able to attach its true value to what he tells us. The form — a long conversation between Yahweh and Moses — seems strange to us; but it appears that the prophets and their pious contemporaries found nothing extraordinary, or, at least, nothing impossible, in it. It need hardly be said that good men in ancient times never really held such conversations, any more than we do so now; but when they looked back upon their inward experience, the conflict between their carnal and their spiritual nature, or, in other words, between flesh and blood on the one hand and God's voice in their heart on the other, took this form, almost without their knowing it. Thus, where we should speak of sympathy and the sense of duty urging us to action, and of fear of men and slothfulness of spirit drawing us back from it, or of the vacillation caused by inward conflicts, an Israelite prophet would speak of a conversation between God on the one hand and the man who was chosen to fulfil some task of God on the other.

Let us endeavor, then, to realize the writer's thoughts about Moses in Midian.

An exile, fleeing for his life, he had found in the desert more than a place of refuge and security; he had found another home. Wife and children held him fast to Reuel's country. An occupation after his own heart, the honored and ancestral task of pasturing sheep, was open to him. Why then should he cast another thought towards that land of Egypt where his tribesmen were suffering, it is true, but only by their own fault, and where his brave deed had waked no echo? They were slaves indeed, but did they not deserve their fate? And yet his heart would burn within him when he thought of them. Were they to be left there for ever to groan beneath the yoke, until they sank exhausted by their toil? It could not, it should not be! But yet what a hopeless task to attempt their deliverance? In the first place the people themselves would have to be roused from their lethargy, the thirst for freedom wakened within them, courage to risk a rebellion stirred in their hearts, a host of difficulties overcome. And then the struggle with the ruler of Egypt would begin, for most certainly he would not let his slaves escape if he could help it. Who was there that could do all this? Who was appointed to undertake the task? "You yourself," said a voice within. But he drew back from the task in fear. He? No. It was utterly beyond his power. — But it was vain to excuse himself. The impulse that urged him on was too mighty for him, and all his difficulties were borne down by it at last. He perceived more and more clearly that it was a god who urged him on. Who was this god? How could he doubt that it was the god of his fathers, mightier than all others, Yahweh! In his name he would call upon the Hebrews to rise. *He* could bow the heads of the Egyptian gods. If the Hebrews would put their trust in Yahweh, then he both would and could deliver them out of the hand of Pharaoh.

Horeb was a holy mountain, where the gods appeared to men. Upon this sacred spot, this place of revelations, the last struggle took place in the mind of Moses. "Go," said the voice of God, "release Israel!" "What is thy name, O Lord of this mountain?" "My name is Yahweh. To me you shall offer worship here when you have rescued your people, and are on the way to the fertile Canaan." But will the Israelites be ready to hear me? Will not their spirit be crushed by oppression? — Yahweh will reveal his might to them. He can do wondrous things. — Am I the right man after all? I have no eloquence! — I must do it! Help will

come to me. Aaron will stand by me. — I dare not. — Yahweh will help me and teach me. I must. To work, then!

Resolved to undertake the giant task, Moses returned to his home. But none must know what was going on in his heart, and what far-spreading plans had come to maturity within him. For if they knew, would not those dear to him keep him back, or, at least, make the struggle harder for him? He had fought with himself, but he evaded the conflict with his friends. "Let me go to Egypt," he said to his father-in-law; "I long to know whether my relatives are still alive." Reuel let him go, never dreaming what dangerous schemes his son-in-law had framed.

On his journey the old difficulties came into his mind afresh. Pharaoh will oppose him, that at least is certain. So be it. He fears him not. But will he really succeed? will he deliver Israel? How! Will not Yahweh's might be too great for Pharaoh? Yes! He will compel him to give way. Force will be met by force. Courage, then! Yahweh is the strongest!

When he met his brother at Horeb, he told him his plans, and inspired him with courage to undertake the work. His doubts were vanquished. Full of faith Moses began his work.

Reader! do you know the meaning of this calling and this strife? If not, God grant that you may soon learn it! There are many men who never understand it. Sorrow is in the world, but they feel no impulse to relieve it. Sin spreads havoc round them, but they are fired by no indignation. Their life is altogether worldly, spiritually they are insensate and dead! But if you truly know and honor God, there is a work set apart for you individually — a work in delivering the wretched, in fighting against every kind of misery — a work in which you must defy the wicked world fearlessly as Moses faced Pharaoh. You will not be left in ignorance as to what this work may be.

When such a noble task invites you, and yet seems too hard for you, because of all the sacrifices it demands, you hesitate, and flesh and blood cry out against it, and you say, "I cannot, I dare not."

Alas! too often, when noble thoughts well up in a heart that is warm towards man and warm towards God, this "dare not" is the end.

Blessed are we if the good impulse is stronger within us than fear or sloth, so that the voice of God, "Thou must," is victorious in the mental strife!

Chapter III.

YAHWEH COMPELS PHARAOH TO LET ISRAEL GO.

Ex. IV. 29–XI. 10.

AFTER the necessary consultations — so says one of the oldest writers — the two noble brothers, whom Yahweh had chosen for the great work, went on their way from Horeb to Egypt. When they had reached their destination they called all the elders of the sons of Israel together, and in their presence performed the wonders which Yahweh had given them power to do. The staff became a serpent, and then turned back into a staff again; and Moses' hand became leprous, and then recovered its healthy hue. How could the people withhold their faith from men who gave such clear proofs that Yahweh had seen the misery of his people and had come to visit them! All that were present bowed down in reverence. The leaders could reckon on their support.

And now the perilous task was begun! Moses and Aaron went to the king to make the demand upon which so much depended. "Yahweh," they said, "the god of Israel, sends you this message: 'Let my people go, that they may hold a festival in my honor in the desert!'" These bold words caused the prince no little amazement and indignation.

"Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his command?" said he. "I know not such a god; and I will never let Israel go." Undaunted by this rough refusal, the valiant brothers answered: "Yahweh is the god of the Hebrews. He has appeared to us. Let us go three days' journey into the desert, then, and worship him there. If we do not, some plague of sickness or of war may befall us." But Egypt's ruler would not listen to them any longer, and exclaimed: "See how you make the people hate their tasks! Begone! Set to work again, instead of making your people idle."

So the first step which Moses and Aaron had taken on behalf of their people had not brought them any nearer to the end they so fervently desired. Nay, they even seemed to be further from it than ever; for, in a burst of passion, Pharaoh commanded the overseers of the Hebrews to give up providing the straw that the laborers had to mix with the clay in making bricks, and yet to require the same amount

of work from them as before. "They are lazy," he said; "they have too much time on their hands, and so they cry out, 'Let us hold a religious festival!' They must have more work given them, and then they will have enough to do without listening to nonsense of this kind."

The unhappy Hebrews, so sorely oppressed already, now learned that still heavier services were required of them. With bitter complaints, but urged on by fear of punishment, they spread all over Egypt in search of stubble, to serve instead of straw in the manufacture of the bricks. Meanwhile they were to make the same number of bricks as before. It could not be done. Their oppressors had demanded impossibilities of them. The first to suffer were the Hebrew overseers that the Egyptian drivers had set over their tribesmen, and made responsible for the work of those under them. It was not long before they felt the lash of their masters. Still they hoped that this iniquitous conduct was not approved of by the king, and so they appealed to him. But he dismissed them in bitter scorn. "You are a pack of sluggards," said the prince. "That 's all that your 'sacrifices to Yahweh' mean. Work! I say, work! You shall have no straw given you, and you must bring up the full number of bricks." In bitterness of soul the Hebrew overseers left the palace. They were to go to their tribesmen and tell them that the cruel decree was irrevocable! At the entrance they found Moses and Aaron waiting to hear whether the statement of their grievances had been favorably received. Need we wonder that they looked upon the two brothers with no friendly eyes — that they spoke hard words to them, and reproached them with having caused the increase of their burdens? No; we need not be surprised, for people are generally inclined to consider the results of any efforts made to help them rather than the good intentions with which they are made; we need not be surprised, for when people are angry, or in trouble, or at a loss what to do, they are glad enough to have some one upon whom to vent their ill-temper. But, however easy to understand, their conduct was not right; and it was very hard for Moses to bear.

What a tumult there must have been in his heart! Were not the reproaches which these poor creatures launched against him, in their bitter disappointment, but too well justified? What good had all his agitation done them? None at all. Their yoke was even heavier than before. In doubt and sadness Moses turned to his god. "Yahweh," said he,

"what wilt thou do! Why is this people so tortured? Why have I been sent here? Ever since I went to Pharaoh, to speak to him in thy name, he has persecuted this people, and thou hast not delivered them." And Yahweh answered his complaint: "Now you shall see what I will do to Pharaoh; for he shall let the people depart with a high hand. Ay! he shall chase them out of his country. Go, to-morrow, early, to the king, as he comes out to examine the water-level in the river. Stand over against him on the bank of the stream, with your magic staff in your hand, and denounce my judgments upon him."

Obedient to the divine command, Moses appeared before the king, and said to him; "O prince! Yahweh, the god of the Hebrews, sent me to you before to command you to set his people free, that they might serve him in the desert. But you have persisted in your disobedience. Now Yahweh tells you by my mouth that you shall behold his might; for as soon as I strike the water of the Nile with this staff it will turn into blood." No sooner said than done. He struck the water with his staff, and, to the amazement of all beholders, it was turned into blood, so that it became undrinkable and the fish died in it. But the tyrant did not trouble himself about it in the least.

In seven days Moses was again commanded by Yahweh to punish the king for his obstinacy. A wave of the magic staff, and the land swarmed with frogs, until the very beds and baking troughs were polluted by them. The king was fairly frightened at last, and promised to give the people leave to hold the festival they desired, if only Moses would pray Yahweh to make this plague cease. Moses agreed, and allowed Pharaoh himself to fix the time at which the prayer should be offered; and, to make it quite clear that the plague was sent by Yahweh, the frogs were to disappear from the land at the time appointed, and only to remain in the Nile. "Do it to-morrow!" said the terrified prince. On the following day, when Moses called upon Yahweh, the creatures suddenly died by thousands, and the country was soon rid of them, except that an unbearable stench rose from the rotting bodies of the frogs that lay about in heaps everywhere. But as soon as the rod was taken from his back, Pharaoh forgot the flogging and broke his word, as, indeed, Yahweh had foretold would be the case.

Then followed another plague, of which the king was again forewarned. Innumerable hosts of flies annoyed the

Egyptians to such a degree that Pharaoh sent for Moses and Aaron once more. "Celebrate your festival here in this country," he said to them. "Impossible!" was the reply; "our religious usages are so utterly opposed to those of the Egyptians that they would stone us if they witnessed them. No; we must go three days' journey into the wilderness, as Yahweh has commanded us." "So be it, then," said the king, assenting to their request; "but you must not go too far. Now pray for me." Moses promised to do so, after giving the king a sharp warning that he had better not break his word again. At his prayer the plague ceased. But Pharaoh became obstinate once more.

This time Yahweh had shown clearly enough why he had sent the calamity; for the land of Goshen, where the Israelites dwelt, had been spared its visitation. This was again the case when he made Pharaoh feel his wrath afresh, by causing all the cattle of the Egyptians — oxen, horses, sheep, camels, and asses — to die of the pest on a certain day mentioned beforehand, whereas the Israelites did not lose a single head of cattle. The king saw all this well enough, but still he remained obstinate.

No better result attended a further visitation, by which, however, Pharaoh might well have been convinced that it was no other than Yahweh who was chastising him. For he had foretold it to him, and at the same time had expressly declared that he had power altogether to destroy both him and his people by the pestilence, but that he allowed them to exist in order that his might should be revealed.[1] When Moses waved his magic rod at the command of Yahweh, the whole land of Egypt, with the exception of Goshen, was visited by such fearful lightning, such terrible thunder, and such an all-destroying storm of hail, that every living creature out of doors was killed, and all the fruit trees and the crops that were above the ground destroyed. Several of Pharaoh's courtiers, who feared Yahweh, had secured their cattle and their slaves under shelter when they heard the catastrophe foretold, but the rest lost every thing. Once more Pharaoh entreated Moses to pray for him, but as soon as the frightful storm abated, he became obstinate again.

Moses and Aaron foretold a plague of locusts next, and then his advisers urged the king to let Israel go. So he sent for the agents of Yahweh's will, and asked them whom they intended to take with them to the festival. "All!" they re-

[1] Exodus ix. 15, after an amended version.

plied; "old and young, men and women, even the very cattle must go with us!" "Then," returned the prince in mockery, "may Yahweh bless you if I let you go! You mean mischief. If you want to hold a festival, your full-grown men may go, but no others." Having thus announced his decision, Pharaoh drove them from his presence; but full soon did he send for them again, for hardly had Moses stretched his staff over Egypt before an east wind had risen and filled the country with unheard-of swarms of locusts, that devoured everything that the hail had spared, till the land became utterly naked. "Pray for me!" cried the humbled prince; "I have sinned against Yahweh and against you." But as soon as Moses had complied with his request, and a west wind had carried all the locusts into the Red Sea, Yahweh hardened the king's heart, and all went on as before.

For three days Egypt — Goshen again excepted — was covered with a darkness so thick that people could not so much as see each other, and dare not leave their beds. This brought the oppressor of the Israelites so far to his senses that he proposed letting them all go if only they would leave their cattle. But even this proposal was rejected by Moses, on the ground that they must take animals for sacrifice with them, and that it was impossible to tell beforehand which beasts their god might desire as offerings. But Pharaoh refused to let Israel go upon any other conditions, and he drove Moses out from his presence, threatening that if ever he came back again he should be put to death. "So be it," said Moses, "I shall not see you again; for this very night Yahweh will go through Egypt, and at midnight he will slay all your firstborn, from the heir to your throne down to the son of the humblest slave-girl, and the firstborn of the cattle too. Then shall there rise a wail from Egypt such as was never heard before and shall never be heard again. Meanwhile not a hair on the head of an Israelite shall be touched, that it may be clearly known that Israel and Egypt are not alike to Yahweh. And after that, these your ministers of state shall come and bow down before me and implore us to depart. Then we shall go." With these wrathful words upon his lips, Moses left the palace.

What he foretold took place. But we shall speak of it in the following chapter.

Before examining more closely the portion of the legend of the plagues of Egypt with which we have so far been deal-

ing, we must place another version by its side. Readers who are familiar with the Biblical narratives will have missed certain traits in the account given above. Two of the well-known "ten plagues," for instance, are wanting. It is easy to guess the reason. Here, too, we have different accounts of what took place in Egypt — accounts which agree in some respects, but differ in others, and have been worked into a single whole by the compiler. Here, too, the three writers, whose hands are constantly detected in the narratives already discussed, may be traced, though we cannot say that the work of each has been preserved complete. The story we have just told is by the Elohist,[1] who gave us the detailed account of the calling of Moses at Horeb. Now let us take the version of the writer who made Moses leave Midian on being told by Yahweh that his persecutors were dead.[2] His story is as follows[3]:—

When Moses had reached Egypt, he was commanded by Yahweh to go into Pharaoh's presence, and ask him to let the Israelites go. Moses objected that he was slow of speech. But Yahweh set aside his difficulty by saying: "See, I make you as a god with regard to Pharaoh; you have only to order, to demand, to punish, to promise. Aaron, your brother, shall be as it were your prophet, and shall bear your messages and carry out your decisions. Let him begin by commanding Pharaoh to let the people go free. But I shall harden the king's heart, and reveal my might in Egypt by many signs and wonders, that the Egyptians may know that I, Yahweh, stretch out my hand over Egypt and bear Israel out of their midst." Then Moses and Aaron did according to the divine command.

Before the time when they were to go before Pharaoh, Yahweh spoke to them once more: "If," said he, "the king should ask you to show him a sign, then do you, Moses, command your brother to fling down his staff, and change it into a serpent." So when they were in the royal presence, Moses turned Aaron's staff into a serpent in the sight of the king and his servants. But Pharaoh, nothing daunted, sent for his magicians, and they performed the same miracle by means of their charms. So Pharaoh, even when Aaron's serpent ate up all the others, remained obstinate, and would not let Israel go free.

Then, at Yahweh's command, Moses told Aaron to stretch his wondrous staff over all the waters of Egypt, and when he

[1] See p. 238. [2] See p 258. [3] Exodus vi. 28 ff.

did so all the water was turned into blood. But the Egyptian sorcerers did the same. So the king remained obstinate.

Yet again Aaron waved the magic staff over all the streams and wells of Egypt, and at once they teemed with frogs. But the magicians were not yet driven off the field. They could do this too.

It was in vain, however, that they tried to imitate the fourth miracle that Aaron wrought with his staff, in changing all the dust into vermin. Man and beast were covered with them, and the magicians themselves said to the king: "This is God's doing!" But Pharaoh was still obstinate.

The impotence of the Egyptian sorcerers was still more completely exposed when Moses and Aaron, in the king's presence, took up a few handfuls of ashes from a furnace and threw them into the air. These ashes produced a fearful eruption upon man and beast; and the magicians were not only unable to produce the same effect on others, but became its victims themselves. Still Yahweh hardened Pharaoh's heart, as he had said he would.

But the end was now close at hand. "Yet one more blow will I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt," said Yahweh to Moses, "and then they will drive you out in hot haste. Now tell the Israelites to borrow gold, and silver, and costly apparel." They did so, and Yahweh made the Egyptians feel kindly towards the Israelites, while Moses, in particular, became very famous both at court and among the people.

There is still a third account taken from the "Book of Origins," interwoven with these two. But we shall deal with it in Chapter IV. We will now proceed to the comparison of the two stories we have given.

The main course of events is the same in both. It is of no great importance that eight plagues are enumerated in the first account, in addition to the miraculous conversion of the staff into a serpent and the momentary leprosy of Moses' hand, which were intended to ensure the faith of the Israelites; whereas the second mentions but five miracles, including the transformation of the staff. It is certainly not accidental that in the second narrative Aaron comes more to the front, and that it is his staff by which the wonders are performed; whereas, in the other, it is Moses himself who waves the magic rod, and offers prayers for the king. But even this is not the most characteristic difference.

There are two other points, however, which specially deserve our attention. They refer to the conduct of Moses, and to the meaning of the miracles.

The first story does not make any attempt to represent Moses, the messenger of Yahweh, as more noble or true to his word than the impious Pharaoh. It is simply a contest in which Moses, by his cunning and audacity in adhering to his pretence of only desiring leave to celebrate a religious festival, succeeds in outwitting Pharaoh; and the victory of Yahweh is not one in which truth triumphs over falsehood, but one in which the strongest and most cunning succeeds in getting his own way.

In the second story, on the other hand, Moses plays his game above-board from the first, and demands the complete liberation of his people. But although the second writer is better than the first in this respect, they both of them tell us, without a word of condemnation, how the Israelites at Yahweh's command took advantage of the bewildered state of the Egyptians, and the haste with which they were leaving the land, to borrow the goods of the native population, without the smallest intention of ever returning them. Both of them tell us, too, that Yahweh himself hardened Pharaoh's heart on purpose to have an opportunity of displaying his great power. Really, in a moral sense, the Yahweh of one writer is no more holy than that of the other.

In the second place, we must observe that the signification of the miracles by which Pharaoh is compelled to let Israel go, is very different in the two narratives. In the first, they are especially intended as punishments. Stress is laid upon the fearful nature of all that Moses foretells and does in Yahweh's name. The disasters by which Egypt is afflicted are even colored so highly as to betray the writer into occasional contradictions. For example, he makes all the cattle of the Egyptians die of the murrain; but they re-appear, to be killed by the hail; yet again, when the last plague comes Yahweh slays the firstborn of the beasts as well as of man. These disasters are intended, according to the first narrative, to move Pharaoh's heart and bring him to repentance. Their object is the same, according to the second, but they are to accomplish it in quite a different way; namely, by convincing the king that Yahweh is so mighty that all attempts at resistance are idle. In his account, therefore, the miracle of the staff is classed with the plagues, and the Egyptian sorcerers enter the lists against Yahweh's messengers. There is a genuine trial of strength between them. The Egyptians succeed in performing the first wonders, though even here Yahweh shows his mastery by enabling Aaron's serpent to eat up the others.

Gradually the Egyptians are driven off the field. First, they themselves exclaim that it is God's work they behold. Then they become victims of the plague. At last they disappear from the scene altogether. Thus whilst the first writer represents Yahweh as determined to make his power *felt*, it is the object of the second — though even he makes the miracles more and more painful in their effects — simply to *prove* that Yahweh is the god of gods. "The god of gods," I have said, rather than "the only god." For, observe, the writer by no means intends to represent these Egyptian sorcerers as impostors. Had it been so, he would utterly have failed in his object. No, they really were able to turn sticks into serpents, and water into blood, and to produce frogs; but Moses and Aaron were still more powerful, and the god of the Israelites, therefore, was stronger than the gods of the Egyptians.

We have spoken already of the superstitious idea that disasters reveal God's displeasure, and of the bad effect upon piety and morality which such a belief exerts,[1] and need not, therefore, dwell upon it here. Nor is it necessary to consider in detail how far these narratives remind us of natural phenomena which actually take place in Egypt. The writers appear to have been well acquainted with the country, and to have been aware that at certain seasons the water of the Nile has a blood-red appearance — that an alarming increase of frogs is not unfrequent — that the country is sometimes visited by a murrain among the cattle or a plague of locusts — and that a species of stinging fly and a painful skin disease, from time to time, afflict both man and beast. But all this does not take away the miraculous character of their stories. The very belief that these disasters succeeded each other at the command of Moses, and with the express object on the part of Yahweh of humiliating Pharaoh, is a mistake from which true piety can only suffer.

We must still dwell for a moment on the representations of the second story, which speaks of the conflict with the magicians, for it calls our attention to the belief in magic. In ancient times this belief was universal, and indeed it still exists, closely connected with the belief in soothsaying or fortune-telling, in the minds of uneducated people. People used to think that there were men and women who, by uttering certain forms of words, or by some other secret art, had power to influence the weather, for example, or the crops, or the health and life of man and beast; in a word, could do things which

[1] See p. 75 ff. 139.

surpassed the power of other men and could not be brought about by natural means. Certain men, in all ages, have really believed themselves to be magicians, while great numbers have simply taken advantage of the ignorance of those about them to make themselves pass for such. This belief is by no means confined to ancient times or uneducated people. Among Christians it even held its ground long after the Reformation of the sixteenth century, especially in the form of that belief in witches that has cost thousands upon thousands of lives.

Amongst the Israelites the magicians were known by very different names, the meaning of which is often uncertain, for they remained in use long after their origin was forgotten. From those names which we can explain, and from the accounts of magicians which we meet in the Israelite literature, we see that they were looked upon as men who muttered magic formulæ, charmed serpents, "excited the dragon" (*i. e.*, stirred up the constellation of that name to eat the sun or the moon), made a day unlucky by their imprecations,[1] and called the dead from the world below.

In ancient times magic was an object not only of fear, but also of reverence. A true messenger of Yahweh must show his credentials, so to speak, in the miracles which he performed, and tradition has chosen the character of a wonder-worker under which to glorify many a prophet. But while belief in the possibility of magic continued to exist, while, indeed, no one thought of disputing it, the thing itself fell into bad repute. People gradually discovered that they had been deceived in some of these wonder-workers. For even the worshippers of other gods than Israel's were sometimes able to do most marvellous things, and even to perform genuine miracles of which they had given due notice. Sometimes Yahweh put the love of his worshippers to the proof, by allowing an upholder of idolatry to perform a well authenticated miracle. Such a deed, then, could not in itself prove the truth of his preaching.[2] By degrees magic came to be pronounced a heathenish practice; the zealots of Yahweh opposed it with all their might, and every one who practised it was threatened by religious reformers and lawgivers with death.[3] So the proof by miracle, which comes out so prominently in our story, was at last altogether rejected. But the great masses of the people still clung to it.

[1] Job iii. 8, after an amended version. [2] Deuteronomy xiii. 1–5.
[3] Exodus xxii. 18. Deuteronomy xviii. 10–11. Leviticus xix. 26, 31, xx. 6 27

Many centuries after Christ, magic was still considered possible. But the Reformation of the sixteenth century gave a heavy blow to the superstition by denying the truth of a number of miraculous stories, especially those in which the saints of the Roman Catholic Church played a part. The belief in magic still survived, however; but just as ancient Israel held it to be heathenish, so the Protestants declared it to be the work of the Devil, who taught men the black art. Our increased knowledge of Nature has gradually undermined the belief in the possibility of miracles, and the time is not far distant when in the mind of every man, of any culture, all accounts of miracles will be banished together to their proper region — that of legend.

Chapter IV.

THE NIGHT OF DELIVERANCE.

Ex. XII. 1–XIII. 16.

"THIS night shall Yahweh put to death all the firstborn in Egypt." Such had been the words of warning uttered by Moses to Pharaoh; and what he predicted had come to pass. That same night the king's eldest son died suddenly in the royal palace, and even in the very prisons the eldest sons of the captives likewise died. In every home rose the wail for an eldest son or an eldest daughter, and at every stall the sheep or ox that was its mother's firstling fell dead. In deep affliction the monarch rose from his bed, while every home in Egypt was filled with cries and sounds of woe. At once, without even waiting for the morning, he sent for Moses and Aaron to the palace. "Go! Go!" he cried to them. "Depart from me, you and your people. Serve Yahweh, as you said you must. Take your sheep and oxen with you too, as you desired. Depart, and bless me too!" The king's ministers were still more urgent. They implored the Israelites to make the utmost speed, "else we shall all perish," they cried. And the Israelites made such haste that they had no time to think of leaven, but put their dough, baking troughs and all, upon their shoulders, just wrapping them round in their upper garments.

So the Israelites departed that night from Ramses to Succoth, with all their cattle; and a great host of people, not really belonging to them, went along with them. The dough from which they prepared their food had never risen, and accordingly they ate unleavened cakes. So Moses said: "Remember this day upon which you have come out of Egypt, and Yahweh has led you thence with a high hand. In remembrance of it you must use no leaven upon this day of the month Abib on which you have come out from Egypt. When Yahweh shall have brought you into the rich land of Canaan, then you must observe this religious ordinance; seven days long in this month you must eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh celebrate a festival in honor of Yahweh. No barm, or anything that is leavened must be seen in your land during those days, and you must declare to your children, This serves as a remembrance of what Yahweh did for us when we left Egypt. To the end of time you must observe this law."[1]

Surely, no elaborate proof is necessary to show us that this story leads us far away from the field of history. Only try to picture the scene. The death of the firstborn; Moses and Aaron summoned to the palace; the command given to depart; the emigration of a whole people — all in one single night! If we say nothing of the astounding number of six hundred thousand men, since it is another writer who furnishes it,[2] and on the same grounds pass over the circumstance that it was just at that very moment that the Israelites asked their neighbors to lend them the gold and silver vessels and the garments,[3] yet, even according to this writer, the Israelites occupied a whole district of their own, and were a decidedly numerous people. Such quick movements, therefore, are inconceivable. But yet we cannot allow them a longer time, for it is just this extreme rapidity upon which the story insists as the reason why all the Israelites had to eat bread that had not risen the next day.

The origin of this feature of the legend is easily explained. The true connection of things has been exactly reversed in the story. Here the custom of eating unleavened bread once a year in the month Abib is derived from the haste the Israelites had to make in leaving Egypt; but the truth is that the feast of unleavened bread was established in some way quite independent of this emigration, and that our

[1] Exodus xii. 29–34, 37–39, xiii. 3–10. [2] Exodus xii. 37.
[3] Exodus xii. 35, 36.

writer is here attempting to give an explanation of the custom, the real origin of which he did not know. Elsewhere,[1] the unleavened bread, which is not very palatable, is called bread of affliction, as if it were intended to commemorate the misery which Israel suffered in Egypt. This, however, would be very inappropriate to a feast of deliverance.

The "feast of unleavened bread" was one of the most ancient of the Israelite festivals, and was celebrated in the month Abib or Nisan, about our April. The real explanation of the use of unleavened bread, from which the festival derived its name, was probably as follows: As soon as the leaven works in flour, it ferments, that is to say, it begins to decompose. Now in ancient times everything in which the smallest trace of decomposition could be discovered was regarded, not only in Israel but elsewhere, as, to a certain extent, unclean. Unleavened bread was holy bread, fit for the priests. The use of it, therefore, might express the idea that the Israelites were a nation of priests, called to holiness. Originally, the feast of unleavened bread was a festival of the husbandmen, at which a sacrifice from the first-fruits of the harvest was made to Yahweh.

The second ancient writer, whose account is woven into a single whole with the one of which we have just spoken, also mentions the last plague, the death of the firstborn. But he does not lay so much stress upon the haste with which the Israelites left the country, though he too mentions it. He also tells us of Moses' orders to the Israelites to borrow all manner of valuables from the Egyptians.[2] But he fixes our chief attention upon the death of the firstborn, since he desires to explain a religious usage of the Israelites by it. Accordingly, he makes Moses issue the following commandment, in the name of Yahweh:[3] "Consecrate all your firstborn to Yahweh! The first youngling dropped by a clean beast, whether ox, sheep, or goat, you must sacrifice to him. The young of an unclean beast — an ass, for example — must be redeemed by a lamb, or else got rid of. And in place of your eldest son or eldest daughter, too, a sacrificial beast must be offered."

The origin of this custom, which is extremely ancient, and probably even dates from a time before that of Moses, is not difficult to explain, after all that we have said of the character of the old Israelite gods, Yahweh among the rest.

[1] Deuteronomy xvi. 3.
[2] Exodus xi. 1–3.
[3] Exodus xiii. 1, 2, 11–16.

If they were reverenced principally as stern beings, nothing is more natural than that their worshippers should seek to win their favor by a great and bloody sacrifice, and so should consecrate to them the firstborn of man and beast, as being the strongest and best.

No doubt the death of the firstborn, or at any rate of Pharaoh's son,[1] formed a part of the most ancient traditions as to the emigration of Israel from Egypt; and we may see from the works of these writers how each took advantage of it in a different way. The one explains from the horror of this event the hot haste with which the Israelites were driven out, and thence again the custom of eating unleavened bread. The other finds in it the explanation of the Israelite's duty to consecrate his firstborn to Yahweh. Still ampler use was made of it, however, as we shall see, by the latest author, the writer of the "Book of Origins."

In the "Book of Origins" the story of the doings of Moses in Egypt was preceded by no account of his calling in Midian. It began as follows:[2] God said to Moses, "I am Yahweh. To the patriarchs I appeared as God Almighty, but under my name Yahweh I did not reveal myself to them. I also made a compact with them, by which I promised them Canaan, the land in which they sojourned as strangers, for an inheritance. Now I have turned my ear to the wailings of the sons of Israel, whom the Egyptians are oppressing, and I have bethought me of my compact. Tell the Israelites, therefore, that I, Yahweh, will free them from the yoke of the Egyptians, and deliver them with a high hand; and that, moreover, I have chosen them as my people, my own possession, and I will be their god, to bring them into the land that I have promised by oath to their fathers." Moses repeated these words to the people, but they were too completely crushed by slavery to listen to him. It was no wonder, then, that when Yahweh told Moses to command Pharaoh, in his name, to set Israel free, he hesitated and cried: "See, even the Israelites themselves would not listen to me! How then can I expect Pharaoh to hear me? Besides, I am slow of speech." But Yahweh repeated his command.

Here the narrative is broken by a list[3] of certain Israelite families of the tribes of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, in which that of Levi occupies the chief place, and the whole is closed by an account of the descent of Moses and Aaron, whom

[1] Exodus iv. 23. [2] Exodus vi. 2 ff. [3] Exodus vi. 13–26.

the writer represents as eighty and eighty-three years old respectively, when they spoke to Pharaoh.[1]

Here followed originally an account — probably a short one — of the judgments which Yahweh brought upon Pharaoh without effect. This was dropped by the Redactor, because he had taken up the more detailed accounts of the same events furnished by the older writers. Then came the last plague, the death of the firstborn, which gave occasion for a long digression on the celebration of the Passover.

We shall return hereafter to some of the special features of this story, more particularly to Yahweh's express declaration that hitherto he had only revealed himself as God Almighty, and to the unbelief of the Israelites. At present we must speak of the Passover. The account given of it is as follows: [2] —

At Yahweh's command, Moses ordered every head of a family to get himself a lamb, one year old, and of the male sex, on the tenth day of the month Abib, with which the year commenced, to keep this lamb till the fourteenth, and then to slaughter it in the evening. Since the whole lamb had to be eaten, two families might join together if the members of one were too few to finish it. We may notice in passing that the Jews of a later time reckoned that one lamb would do for more than ten, but not so many as twenty persons. The lamb was to be roasted whole — entrails and all — and eaten with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. What was left when all who joined the festival were satisfied must be burned. In eating the meal they had to stand, with their outer clothing tucked up, their sandals on their feet, and their staves in their hands, as if they were in haste. This feast was called Pesach, that is *sparing;* because when Yahweh passed through Egypt in the night to slay all the firstborn, he would *spare* the Israelites. To make sure of this, they must put a streak of the lamb's blood upon the doorposts and thresholds of their houses. Wherever he saw this sign the angel of Yahweh would pass by the house. The week of unleavened bread began with this feast, and its first and last days were to be observed as days of rest. As for the strangers who were dwelling amongst the Israelites, all those who had submitted to circumcision, the token of the covenant, were to observe the Pesach.

We cannot fail to notice how badly this story agrees with that of the other writers, who make the Israelites leave

[1] Exodus vii. 7. [2] Exodus xii. 1 ff.

Egypt in such haste that they have no time to let their bread rise. For here they are informed four days beforehand that they are to depart on the night of the fourteenth, and are commanded to have no leaven in their houses at the time, so that the circumstance of their taking unleavened bread with them is anything but accidental, as the other writers make it.

The history of the Jewish feast of Pesach is far from certain. Probably it was an old Israelite new-year's feast, and this may be the meaning of the name Pesach, which is best translated by "transition," and has given rise, by a misunderstanding, to our name "Passover." This feast, with all its usages, which were in anything but harmony with the pure worship of Yahweh, seems to have been faithfully and zealously observed by most of the Israelites, especially the adherents of the heathen party. It fell at about the same time of year as the strictly Israelite feast of unleavened bread, and since the champions of the Mosaic principles saw no chance of getting rid of this feast of Pesach, which was such a thorn in their sides, they found a place for it in the worship of Yahweh, and connected it with the feast of unleavened bread. This explanation, indeed, is only conjectural, but it is certain that the most ancient laws deal with the feast of unleavened bread alone,[1] and that the earliest regulations of the Passover only date from the time of King Josiah.[2] Even they make no mention of a paschal lamb as yet, but allow the Israelites to offer "sheep and oxen" on the occasion. The first trustworthy accounts of the actual celebration of a Passover likewise place it in the reign of Josiah.[3]

The narrative we are now considering dates from the first century after the Babylonian captivity, and contains the oldest description of the details of the feast. The regulation that the Israelites were to eat the lamb as if they were standing ready to start on a hurried journey, certainly was not borrowed by the writer from the existing usage, but was supplied by himself to bring into prominence the meaning he attached to the feast. The same may be said of the command about streaking the doorposts with blood. But such practices are not easily impressed upon a people, and as far as we know the precepts were never observed. The Bible contains no further regulations concerning the feast, except with refer-

[1] Exodus xxiii. 15, xxxiv. 18. Deuteronomy xvi. 16.
[2] Deuteronomy xvi. 1, 2, 5. [3] 2 Kings xxiii. 21, 22.

ence to the so-called little Passover which was to be held on the fourteenth day of the second month by those who had been prevented from celebrating it on the fourteenth of Nisan.[1] The Rabbis, of course, have made a number of special rules about the various observances.

The Passover has become the great feast of the Jews, and is always zealously observed. It is but natural that it should be so. The observances connected with it have struck deep roots through the unbroken usage of centuries; for nothing has such desperate tenacity of life as ancient customs. Even when no longer understood they are obstinately retained. After the captivity, no one really knew what was the origin of that roasted lamb and those bitter herbs, any more than we do now; but as long as the Temple stood, in the forecourt of which the lamb was to be slaughtered, so long was the custom kept up. Then it fell into disuse; for the old law laid down so distinctly that the paschal lamb must not be eaten just anywhere that happened, but at Jerusalem alone,[2] that it was impossible to overlook this point. Still, the Passover itself was observed as the festival of the nation's birth. Under the hands of reformers the ancient feasts of the harvest and the new-year had become for Israel days of commemoration of Yahweh's goodness, and as such they were still kept up. This change of the old festivals from the ploughman's and reaper's feasts to days of national commemoration, is a mark of progress; for though it is a matter of interest to every man that he is entering upon a new year, or sees a good harvest ripening, yet it is of far greater importance to a people to keep in mind its origin and the most important facts of its past history. It exerts an exalting, hallowing influence over it.

Yahweh released Israel from Egypt! It was this that the Jews remembered with such thankful joy during the centuries in which his people were for the most part in a state of deep humiliation. "Why was Israel made a nation at the time we are commemorating? What does Yahweh require of us? Why are we the chosen ones of the Almighty, so insignificant and rejected? What is to become of us? What is this people's destiny?" Such questions forced themselves upon the minds of thoughtful men during the festivities and usages with which these memories were connected, and filled them with earnest thoughts.

It could not but have a good effect upon the faithful Jew

[1] Numbers ix. 1–14. [2] Deuteronomy xvi. 2, 5, 6.

when, at the celebration of the Passover, he joined in singing the great Hallel, *i.e.*, Psalms cxiii.–cxviii., with all its depth and joy of religious feeling. Listen, for instance, to the song with which it opens: —

Halleluyah! (*i.e.*, praise Yahweh),
Ye servants of Yahweh praise,
Ay, praise ye Yahweh's name!
Blessed be Yahweh's name
Henceforth, for ever and ever!
From the east unto the west
Let Yahweh's name be praised!
Exalted above all peoples is Yahweh,
His glory is higher than heaven!
Who is like Yahweh, our god,
Who is enthroned on high?
Who looks down from above
Upon all things in heaven and earth!
Who raises the poor from the dust,
And lifts up the needy from the mire!
Sets him by the side of the nobles
Among the great ones of his people!
And makes a childless woman
A joyful mother of sons!
Halleluyah!

Chapter V.

THE EXODUS.

Ex. XIII. 17–XV. 21.

IN the last chapter we spoke of the religious usages in which the Israelites celebrated the memory of their forefathers' deliverance from Egypt. But we have not yet quite done with the old legends that tell us about the deliverance itself. A few more words, however, will suffice.

Instead of going straight from the land of Goshen in a north-easterly direction towards Canaan, the Israelites turned south, and came to the northern extremity of the so-called Red Sea. Meanwhile Yahweh had once more hardened Pharaoh's heart; so he set out with an army in pursuit of his runaway slaves, and hemmed them in between the sea and his own troops. But Yahweh, cleaving the waters of the gulf, led them across its bed to the other side in safety; and when the Egyptians boldly followed them along this wondrous pathway, he made them pay for their rashness by destroying them

amid the returning waves, and not a single man was left alive. Full of triumph in their escape, the rescued Israelites raised the song: "Sing to the glory of Yahweh! for he is great. The horse and his rider he dashes into the sea!"

Here, again, the account is made up from two old legends that give us different representations of the event in many particulars. According to the one, God led his people southwards into the desert, instead of straight to Canaan, because otherwise they would have come into immediate collision with the Philistines, and fear of this warlike tribe might have made them desire to turn back to Egypt;[1] whereas the other narrator says that Yahweh deliberately led the Israelites from Ramses to Succoth,[2] thence to Etham, thence to Pi-Hachiroth, on the western shore of the sea, with the very dishonorable purpose of tempting Pharaoh to pursue the Israelites, since they appeared to have lost themselves. This would give Yahweh one more opportunity of showing by Pharaoh's destruction how mighty he, the god of Israel, was.[3] This writer also tells us of a special sign of the divine presence; namely, a column of fire by night and a column of smoke by day, which went in front of the army and showed it the way to go.[4] Now when Israel was passing through the Red Sea, this column placed itself behind the people and gave them light, while its dark side was turned upon the Egyptians, so that the two armies never came to close quarters all the night.[5] This idea apparently owes its origin to the ancient custom of carrying a fire before a caravan or an army in the desert. By night it sent up a clear flame, and by day it was supplied with such fuel as would form a column of smoke. It would, therefore, be a kind of ensign which every one could always see. The other narrator has not a word of this. According to one legend Israel went out "with uplifted hand," that is, in our military language, "with flying colors;"[6] according to the other they fled, and when they saw Pharaoh's troops drawing near were greatly terrified, until Moses quieted their fears.[7] One story makes a strong east wind dry the sea;[8] the other says that Moses dried it with a wave of his magic staff.[9] According to the one the hymn of triumph was sung by Moses' sister, Miriam the prophetess, who led the girls in the festal dance, timbrel in hand, and was the first to raise the alternating or responsive song;[10] the other puts into the

[1] Exodus xiii. 17. [2] Exodus xii. 37. [3] Exodus xiv. 1–4.
[4] Exodus xiii. 20–22. [5] Exodus xiv. 19, 20. [6] Exodus xiv. 8.
[7] Exodus xiv. 10–14. [8] Exodus xiv. 21. [9] Exodus xiv. 15–18.
[10] Exodus xv. 20, 21.

mouth of Moses and all Israel an elaborate song of praise,[1] which could not possibly have been composed until some time after the passage of the Red Sea, since it speaks of the conquest of Canaan as of something already accomplished.[2]

The so-called Red Sea or "Sea of Rushes," through which the Israelites are said to have passed, is now connected by the Suez Canal with the Mediterranean, and appears in early times to have extended further north than it does at present. This Red Sea is subject to a violent ebb and flow of the tide, and more than one traveller has informed us that a little north of Suez it is possible to wade across the gulf at low water, not indeed dry-footed, but yet without danger. It is remarkable that the tide rises and falls very suddenly there. These peculiarities of the place have probably given rise to the formation of our legends, but they cannot make the story credible as it now stands. For it is no ordinary ebb, with the succeeding flood, of which it tells us, but a miracle, worked, according to one of the narrators, by the staff of Moses; and it is expressly said that the water stood up like a wall right and left of the Israelites as they passed through, and that it rushed back into its bed at the command of Moses.

Instead of dwelling any longer upon these points, we will now see what the Egyptian tradition has to tell us of this "Exodus" or *going out* of the Israelites which has given its name to the second book of the Bible.

Manetho,[3] then, tells us the following story: — King Amenophis desired the privilege, which had been granted to one of his predecessors, of seeing the gods. One of the priests told him that there would be no difficulty about it if he would cleanse Egypt of all who were unclean or leprous. In order to comply with this condition, the prince assembled eighty thousand of those unhappy men, and condemned them to work as slaves in the stone quarries east of the Nile. But amongst them were certain priests, who, as such, were favorites of the gods. So the priest who had told the king the condition upon which his wish might be accomplished, began to be afraid that the gods would take the part of their servants, and accordingly punish him. He was so terrified that he put an end to his own life, having first sent the king a written prophecy that these lepers, assisted by foreigners, would rule over Egypt thirteen years. At the request of the unhappy convicts in the stone quarries, the king released

[1] Exodus xv. [2] Exodus xv. 13. [3] See p. 248.

them from their painful toil, and let them dwell in the city of Avaris, which had been built by the Hyksos. Then Osarsiph, a priest of Heliopolis, put himself at their head, gave them laws which violated all the customs of the Egyptians, and with the aid of the remnant of the Hyksos conquered Egypt. Their rule was terrible beyond description; but after thirteen years they were driven out by the king's son, Sethos or Ramses by name, and pursued to the borders of Syria. This priest afterwards took the name of Moses.

If this last piece of information were taken from the ancient traditions there would be no kind of doubt as to this being the Egyptian account of the Exodus of the Israelites. But this is not the case. The concluding words in which we are told that Osarsiph afterwards called himself Moses, simply give us the opinion of Manetho himself, who believed that the lepers of the old tradition were no other than the Israelites. This story has very few features in common with that in the Bible; and doubtless there were other occasions upon which tribes of shepherds left Egypt with or without the consent of the inhabitants. The Philistines, amongst others, probably came from Egypt,[1] and accordingly some scholars have found in the Egyptian story a reminiscence of the emigration of this warlike tribe. The enemies of the Jews took advantage of the story to represent them as descendants of leprous Egyptians, and for this reason Josephus does his very best to throw doubt upon its truthfulness. It is very difficult to come to any decided conclusion; for, after all, the two traditions do agree very remarkably in some few points, as, for example, in saying that the tribes were expelled by the son and successor of the king who had oppressed them, and that there was a religious question at the root of the whole.

At the heart of these legends lies some such representation of what took place, as follows: — The Hebrews, who lived in the province of Goshen, were oppressed by Ramses II.; heavy burdens were laid upon them, and the cities of Ramses and Pithom were built partly to keep them in subjection and partly to protect the frontier against the Bedouins. As long as Ramses lived every attempt at a rising was in vain. But when he died and was followed by his son Menephthah a successful conspiracy, of which Moses and his brother were the soul, was formed by the sufferers. After several vain attempts, the object of the insurgents was ac-

[1] Genesis x. 14.

complished, and they threw off Pharaoh's yoke, inflicting a defeat upon him on the shores of the Red Sea, which deprived him of all hopes of keeping his slaves in his power. It is certainly true, moreover, that there was some new revelation of the nature of the deity, just before the effort on the part of these tribes to gain their freedom: for in ancient times it was generally a religious movement that stirred the life of a people and led to a political or social revolution. Perhaps, also, it is historically true that just at the time Egypt suffered a number of disasters, which discouraged the king and his people, and of which the Israelites took advantage to throw off the yoke, looking upon them as signs that their god, or rather their gods, were helping them, and that they were stronger than the gods of the Egyptians. It is also quite possible that the stories of the passage of the Red Sea preserve the memory of the Israelites having taken advantage of the ebb to cross a ford of the sea and having thus escaped, while the Egyptians were surprised by the flood as they hurried in pursuit of them.

But the whole of this history becomes unintelligible if we believe the statement that the sons of Israel numbered six hundred thousand men, when they left Egypt.[1] For if we add to this, not only the women and children but the "mixed multitude" as it is called, which was thought sufficiently numerous to be mentioned separately,[2] we shall reach a figure of about three millions. If this were so, it would not only be impossible to conceive of the whole people getting into order for their journey in one night, but even of their being oppressed in the manner stated in Exodus, or crossing the sea in a single night. To form some idea of all that would have been involved in this, we have only to remember that in 1812, when Napoleon crossed the river Niemen, it took his army of about two hundred and thirty thousand men three days and nights to cross the river, by three bridges, in close file. If we bear in mind that the Israelites would have about three times as many fighting men, encumbered, too, with all those women, children, and flocks, the impossibility of what we are told becomes obvious. In the same manner it is easy to say: "And Moses said to the Israelites: Rise up!" but where no telegraph was available, it would take one or two days for an order to break up to reach the furthest quarter of a camp in which there were about three million people. The sequel of the history, the

[1] Exodus xii. 37. [2] Exodus xii. 38.

wandering in the desert, the fruitless efforts to gain a fatherland, — everything becomes equally inexplicable, or rather impossible, on the supposition that the Israelites were as numerous as is here stated.

Where does this enormous figure come from? Probably some writer used it in the first instance as a round number, to signify a great multitude; but the writer of the "Book of Origins" means it seriously and literally, and gives us, on one occasion, the number of six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty men over twenty;[1] and, on another, that of six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty,[2] besides the Levites, who were twenty-two thousand strong.[3] Moreover, he goes so far as to tell us how many men belonged to each of the tribes.[4] But although such detailed statements give the narrative an air of truth, they are in fact utterly untrustworthy, and perhaps rest upon calculations just as artificial as the estimate of the time which the Israelites spent in Egypt.[5] How strong the Israelites really were we cannot tell; but when we think how much difficulty they had in conquering Canaan, and that they only partially succeeded after all, we shall be more inclined to agree with the writers who say that they were but few in number,[6] than with those who declare that they were countless as the stars of heaven.[7] In fact we shall probably be rather above than below the mark if we put their army at sixty thousand instead of six hundred thousand.

The deliverance from Egypt, of course, brought great glory to Yahweh, the god in whose name Moses had acted. Let us put ourselves, as well as we can, in the position of the people of an age when belief in many gods was universal! The Israelites worshipped a number of gods; but they did not all pay homage to the same. On the contrary, every tribe, every clan, every family, had its own god or its own gods, and they bore a more or less exalted character according to the degree of the spiritual elevation of their worshippers. Many a one had his own special gods, upon whose favor or disfavor he believed his lot to depend. One worshipped stones and such lifeless objects; another worshipped an animal; one the heavenly bodies; another a tree or a mountain. But did all the "sons of Israel" call upon the same deity as their

[1] Numbers i. 45, 46. [2] Numbers xxvi. 51. [3] Numbers iii. 14–39.
[4] Numbers i., ii. [5] See p. 65.
[6] Exodus xxiii. 27–30. Deuteronomy vii. 7, &c. [7] Deuteronomy i. 10.

national god, and the guardian of their tribal federation? This is a question which could only be answered with certainty if we knew how closely the sons of Israel were united together in Egypt. If there was any god whom they worshipped in common, there is no doubt that they called him El-shaddai. Now in the conception of Moses Yahweh was exalted above all gods. Probably he was the god of his own tribe or clan. Indeed this would be almost certain if we could accept it as a fact[1] that his mother's name was Jochebed (or Yo-chebed), for the first syllable of this name is an abbreviation of "Yahweh." As it is, however, the whole question is doubtful. But wherever this worship came from, however ancient or recent this name of the god may have been, it is certain that Moses came forward as the envoy of Yahweh. Thus every defeat of the Israelites, every failure in the plans of their bold leader, seemed a proof of the weakness of his god. The triumph of the Hebrews, on the contrary, and the disasters which came upon Pharaoh and Egypt, were proofs of his great power. He had made the gods of Egypt feel the strength of his arm,[2] and was therefore the mightiest of gods, the El-shaddai. He in whose name Moses had acted became the object of the adoration of the people which owed to Moses its redemption from slavery. Although another Israelite makes the worship of Yahweh date from the times of Enos,[3] and tells us that he was adored by the patriarchs as their god, it is a well-established and easily-explained fact that Yahweh was Israel's god "from the land of Egypt," as Hosea expresses it.[4] Not that he was the only god of the Israelites — for he had to share the honors of worship with others for centuries afterwards — but he was the special national god. So, when the Red Sea parted the Hebrews from their pursuers, the foundation was laid for the worship of a single god, whose glory was to be maintained in spite of all opposition, the conception of whose nature was to be purified ever more and more, who was to number some of the greatest men that have ever lived amongst his worshippers, in whom pre-Christian antiquity might find its boast, and from the service of whom Christianity itself was to be developed.

"Yahweh is the mightiest of gods!" Such was the shout of some thousands of uncouth warriors who had just wrenched their necks, with danger and difficulty, from beneath the yoke

[1] See p. 250.
[2] Numbers xxxiii. 4.
[3] Genesis iv. 26.
[4] Hosea xiii. 4.

of slavery; and now, when twenty-three centuries have passed, millions of men still raise, in many tongues, the temple songs which his worshippers composed in honor of him as centuries went by; and, changing the name of Yahweh for Lord or Eternal, still sing the song:[1]—

Shout to the glory of Yahweh, O thou whole earth!
Serve Yahweh with gladness,
Come before his presence with rejoicing!
Declare that Yahweh is God:
He has made us, and we are his;[2]
His people are we, the flock of his pasture.
Go into his temple-gates with offerings of thanksgiving—
Into his forecourts with songs of praise.
Thank him, bless his name.
For Yahweh is good, his mercy is everlasting,
And his truth endures from generation to generation.

Chapter VI.

FROM THE RED SEA TO MOUNT HOREB.

Ex. XV. 22–XVII.

WHEN the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea — so all the old traditions tell us — they turned south-east to the neighborhood of Horeb. The passage referred to at the head of our chapter does not mention all the resting-places that are given elsewhere,[3] but of such as it does record the traditions have something definite to tell us. These accounts are far from forming a compact whole, and are evidently drawn from very different sources. Whenever it is worth while to point out the differences between them, we shall do so.

From the shores of the Red Sea Moses led the people to the desert of Shur, which they reached in three days, and where they suffered for want of water. At last they found a well at Marah, but its waters were bitter, as is indicated by the name, which signifies "bitterness." When the people, parched with thirst, murmured against their leader and asked him for water, Moses turned to his god; and Yahweh did not leave him in perplexity, but showed him a piece of wood, which he had only to throw into the well to make the water drinkable. When the truth of Yahweh's word had been proved, it served to confirm the authority of Moses, and he

[1] Psalm c. [2] After an amended version. [3] Numbers xxxiii. 8–15.

made use of it to impress the commands of his god upon the hearts of his people, promising that if they would listen faithfully to Yahweh's commandments the diseases with which the Egyptians were afflicted should not visit them, for "Yahweh was their physician." From Marah the Israelites went on to Elim, where they found twelve wells and seventy palm trees.

This description agrees pretty closely with the actual condition of the western coast of the peninsula. Three days' journey from the Red Sea, on the regular route to Sinai, the traveller who has looked in vain for water all the way still finds a bitter well, which the Arabs call Hawara, *i.e.* "destruction," because they believe the bitter water to be hurtful. The Bedouins are not acquainted with any kind of wood that can sweeten the water, though this remedy is often enough applied to bitter waters elsewhere. A few hours' journey south of this well is still to be found one of the best-watered spots in the whole peninsula, with seven wells and a grove of date trees.

From Elim the Israelites passed, on their way to Sinai, into the desert of Sin. When they had reached this place, on the fifteenth day of the second month after the exodus, discontent broke out in the camp again, for the provisions began to fail. "Why couldn't you let us alone to die in Egypt?" cried the people to their leaders. "There we sat by the flesh-pots and had bread enough to eat. And now you have brought us here to die of hunger." But Moses and Aaron answered them: "This evening you shall learn that no other than Yahweh has led you out of Egypt, and tomorrow in the morning you shall see his glory; for he has heard your murmurings. It is not against us, but against him that you murmur. Who are we that you should murmur against us?" Full of hope, and half ashamed of their complaints, the Israelites turned their faces to the desert, towards Mount Sinai, and behold! the divine glory displayed itself in the pillar of cloud, the visible token of Yahweh's presence: he had not forgotten them.

No, Yahweh had not forgotten them; as they were soon to learn. For in the evening there came countless flocks of quails that settled in the midst of the camp, and seemed completely to cover it, so that the people had only to put out their hands to seize them; and in the morning a thick dew surrounded the camp, and, when it cleared off, left the plain covered with innumerable grains of a certain unknown substance. When they saw this, the Israelites said: "What

(man) is that?" So they called it "man" or manna. "See now," said Moses, "the bread that Yahweh has sent you; he gives it you upon this condition, that each one gather a *gomer* (that is the tenth of an *ephah*) for every person in his tent." The Israelites obeyed. Now some of them gathered more than others, and yet when they came to measure it, it was found that each had just a *gomer*. They could not preserve any of it; for what they did not eat went bad in the night. All that was left upon the ground, too, quickly disappeared, for as soon as the air grew warm it melted away. But it fell again every morning. It was round, white, and sweet as honey. On the sixth day they found that what they had gathered was twice as much as it had been before, and Moses told them that this was specially ordained by Yahweh to enable them to keep the Sabbath holy. They need not be afraid of keeping half of what they had gathered on Friday morning till the next day, for it would not go bad. It would be useless to go out to look for the heavenly bread on the day of rest, for none would fall. Some of the Israelites discovered to their shame that this was true, for they came back empty-handed after a vain endeavor to find the manna upon the Sabbath; and, moreover, were chastised by Moses for persistently refusing to obey the commandments of Yahweh and for breaking the Sabbath. Aaron was further commanded to keep a *gomer* of manna in an earthen vessel as a memorial for posterity. He did so, and put it in front of the ark.

The portions of the story that speaks of hallowing the Sabbath and the preservation of a pot of manna,[1] are of much more recent date than the rest. Of the quails, which are here only mentioned in passing, we have another and more detailed account, of which we shall speak presently. The stories of the extraordinary abundance of these birds and of the manna-dew are alike borrowed from real phenomena of Nature. Innumerable flocks of quails are often seen in Arabia, Palestine, Asia Minor, and Italy, and not unfrequently they fall to the ground by thousands from sheer exhaustion, or at least can be caught without difficulty. Manna is a substance well known in Southern Europe and central Asia, and is used by apothecaries. It is a sticky, sweet-tasting sap, that flows in June and July, from the bark of several trees, especially that of a species of tamarisk. At night it is liquid, but it thickens towards morning. After sunrise it melts, and is then more

[1] Exodus xvi. 4, 5, 22–36.

difficult to collect. The ancients believed it to fall from the air, as honey also was sometimes supposed to do; and there are certain facts which seem to prove that the manna juice is really suspended and carried away in a finely-divided condition by the air, and then deposited, in damp weather, as a sweet dew. It may sometimes be useful as a medicine, but if used as the chief article of food it would be most injurious.

From the desert of Sin they proceeded further east, at the command of Yahweh, until at Rephidim, the plain to the north of Horeb, the people suffered again from want of water. In bitterness of soul they turned upon Moses with the cry: "Give us water!" Perplexed and indignant Moses answered: "Why do you strive against me? Why do you put Yahweh's willingness to such a test?" — "You have but led us out of Egypt to kill us, with our children and our cattle," cried the multitude. — "O Yahweh!" said Israel's leader, praying to his god, "what am I to do with this people? They are not far from stoning me to death!" And Yahweh answered: "Stand before them in the way, with some of the elders of Israel, and take the staff with which you smote the Nile in your hand. See, I will go before you and stand there at the rock of Horeb. As soon as you strike this rock, there shall come out of it water enough to quench the thirst of the people." Moses did as Yahweh had told him, in the sight of the elders of Israel, and the desired result took place. He called the place Massah and Meribah — that is, *Temptation* and *Strife* — because the Israelites had striven with him there and had tempted their god or put him to the proof, saying: "Let us see now whether Yahweh is really in our midst or not."

There is only one other passage[1] in which we are told of Moses striking a rock at the command of Yahweh, and making water flow from it; but the love of exaggeration is so universal that we cannot be surprised to find the poet of one of the Psalms, which commemorates Yahweh's glorious deeds,[2] magnifying what is here narrated as follows: —

> He split the rocks in the desert,
> And gave them to drink in abundance, with floods;
> He made streams come out of the rock
> And waters run down in rivers.

But while we can easily forgive a poet for being a little high-flown, we are not so well pleased to find the Jewish scribes, in no poetical outbursts, but in sober, argumentative prose, talking nonsense about a rock that followed the camp

[1] Numbers xx. 11. [2] Psalm lxxviii. 15, 16, compare Psalm cxiv. 8.

of the Israelites wherever it went, and kept them constantly supplied with water; and it certainly is not very satisfactory to find such a man as the apostle Paul taking these ridiculous stories to be true, and looking for a hidden meaning in them.[1]

Had the story a spiritual meaning originally? It is difficult to give any positive answer. It is remarkable that in this passage Horeb is called the "mountain of God," which Moses ascended, as we shall see, to receive revelations from Yahweh, and that Yahweh himself stands upon the rock from which the water is to spring. The prediction of no less than three prophets of the time of the captivity,[2] that a stream should flow from the temple of Yahweh, seems to be related in some way to the description just given. Can this stream of living water, a priceless boon to an Eastern, represent the teaching of Yahweh? However this may be, the account given in Exodus is distinctly meant to tell us of a miracle by which Yahweh sought to prove to the Israelites that he was with them.

The same lesson was to be learned by them from the manner in which they gained a victory (still at Rephidim) over the wandering robber-tribe of the Amalekites. When these marauders fell upon the Israelites, Moses commanded Joshua to take the field against them with a few picked troops, while he himself went on the following day, staff in hand, to stand on the summit of a hill. Joshua obeyed, and Moses ascended the hill, accompanied by Aaron, and a certain Hur, who reappears once or twice in the ancient traditions[3] as a companion of Moses. It soon became clear that the victory did not depend upon the warriors engaged in the battle, but upon Moses, for whenever he raised the wondrous staff on high, the Israelites had the advantage, but no sooner did he drop the hand in which he held the staff than the Amalekites became too strong for them. Moses, of course, did all that was possible to secure the victory for his people, but at last his arms became so weary that he could bear it no longer. Then his companions came to his assistance, brought a stone upon which he could sit down, and supported his arms, one upon each side. So Moses was able to keep his hands uplifted until evening, and Joshua was enabled to defeat the Amalekites. After the successful termination of the contest, Yahweh said to Moses:

[1] 1 Corinthians x. 4.
[2] Joel iii. 18; Ezekiel xlvii. 1 ff.; Zechariah xiii. 1, xiv. 8.
[3] Exodus xxiv. 14, xxxi. 2.

"Write this in a book for a memorial, and let Joshua surely know that I will root out the memory of Amalek from under the sun." Then Moses built an altar, which he called "Yahweh, my banner;" and sang, —

"The hand on the banner[1] of Yahweh!
War of Yahweh against Amalek,
From generation to generation!"

Israel murmuring in the desert is a striking type of discontent. Hardly released from the most fearful slavery, Israel not only complains of its present, but actually exalts its past to the skies, and hungers after the flesh-pots of Egypt, forgetting all the misery it had had to endure there. Just so the discontented always praise "the good old times," while they see nothing but the dark side of the present, and have no courage to meet the future. But it was not the object of the ancient legend to represent the forefathers of the people in an unfavorable light. To display the greatness of Yahweh, to glorify his endless goodness to his people, to exalt his infinite power over nature and over man, — this was its chief aim. Israel, in its discontent, had constantly put Yahweh to the test; but he had always come out triumphantly. The writer of Deuteronomy[2] admirably expresses the meaning of the oldest legends, in the words, "He fed you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man lives not by bread alone, but by all that Yahweh may provide." "Beware," such is the warning he puts into the mouth of Moses.[3] "Beware, when you are prosperous and have become rich, that you forget not in your pride Yahweh, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and led you through the desert, the great and terrible wilderness, full of serpents, dragons, and scorpions, the parched and waterless region; Yahweh, who made water spring out of the flint rock, who fed you with manna in the desert, to humble you and try you and do good to you at last. May you never say: 'My own power and the might of my own hand has got me these possessions,' but may you ever be mindful that it was Yahweh who made you thus prosperous, so as to establish the covenant that he had sworn to your fathers."

It is not by its own efforts, but by Yahweh's help, that Israel is blessed; not only each individual, but the whole nation, is absolutely dependent upon him; to trust in him without reserve is the surest way to prosperity; such — as we

[1] Exodus xvii. 16, after an amended version.
[2] Deuteronomy viii. 3. [3] Vv. 11–18.

have already hinted[1] and shall afterwards show at greater length — was one of the leading thoughts of the Israelite prophets in the last centuries before the captivity. Their conception of the nature of God's help was often one-sided to the last degree, and brought Israel to many an utterly false conclusion. Trust in Yahweh often led to great mistakes. "It is not by natural means, it is not by bread earned in the common way, it is not by our own care and toil, it is not by working heartily together, it is by Yahweh's help alone that we enjoy our blessings"—such a belief, seriously maintained and believed, must, on many important occasions, have tended to make the Israelites leave things to take their own course, while they themselves neglected all precautions and became utterly reckless. But for all that, their unreserved confidence in Yahweh proved a mighty source of strength to the pious sons of Israel in many a time of depression. It kept them firm, and enabled them to triumph in the midst of terrible temptations. In the Psalms of the Israelites we find the most impressive outpourings of their trust in Yahweh. Some of these we have already seen,[2] but will now take one more, in which the contrast pointed out above, between self-help and trust in Yahweh, comes out very distinctly:[3]—

Rejoice to the glory of Yahweh, ye righteous!
It becomes the upright to praise him.
Praise Yahweh with the harp,
Exalt him with the lute!
Sing him a new song,
Make the strings thrill with a strong and joyful sound!
For the commandment of Yahweh is good,
His deeds are faithful.
Justice and righteousness he loves.
The earth is full of Yahweh's goodness.
By Yahweh's word was the heaven made,
The heavenly host by the breath of his mouth.
He piles up the waters of the sea like sheaves,
He lays up streams in treasure-houses.
Fear before Yahweh, all the earth!
Stand in awe of him, all inhabitants of the world!
For he speaks, and it is there;
He commands, and it stands fast.
Yahweh destroys the counsel of the heathen,
And brings the plans of the peoples to nought.
But Yahweh's decree stands fast for ever,
The thoughts of his heart to all generations.
Blessed is the people whose god is Yahweh,
Whom he hath chosen for his inheritance!
Yahweh looks down from heaven;
He beholds all the children of men.
From the place where he dwells he looks

[1] See p. 25. [2] See pp. 210, 222. [3] Psalm xxxiii.

Upon all the dwellers on earth.
He formed their hearts,
And looks upon all their doings.
A king does not triumph by the strength of his army,
Or a hero escape by the greatness of his might.
The horsemen are spoiled of their victory,
Their might defends them not from defeat.
Behold, Yahweh's eye is on them that serve him,
On them that hope in his grace.
He delivers their soul from death,
Their life in the time of famine.
We wait upon Yahweh;
Our help and our shield is he.
For in him our heart rejoices,
We trust in his holy name.
May thy grace, O Yahweh, be with us,
Because our trust is in thee!

The same thought is still more clearly expressed in the following lines taken from another song:[1]—

Some trust in chariots and some in horses,
But we in the name of Yahweh, our god.
They are brought down and fallen,
But we are risen and stand upright.

Chapter VII.

MOSES REPRESENTS YAHWEH.

Ex. XIX., XX. 18–26; XXIV. 1. 9–11; XXXIII. 7–11; Num. XII.

THE peninsula in which, according to the narratives just given, the Israelites pursued their journey from Egypt, is usually known as the Peninsula of Sinai. Geographers call it Arabia Petræa, which is generally translated *Stony* Arabia, but really means that part of Arabia in which *Petra*, the capital of the Edomites, is situated. The southern portion of this peninsula is covered by a mountain range that falls into two groups, the most western of which is known as Serbal and the other as Sinai. The former has been held sacred from the earliest ages, as its very name, which means "the mountain of Bel," sufficiently indicates. North of this mountain, along the shores of the Red Sea, run a number of valleys, one of which is called "the written valley,"[2] on account of the number of inscriptions cut upon its rocky

[1] Psalm xx. 7, 8. [2] See Map II.

walls by the pilgrims on their way to Serbal. To this very day, though the inhabitants of the neighborhood are followers of Mohammed, they venerate Mount Serbal as a consecrated spot. Sinai is a loftier group, and consists chiefly of three mountains. The one to the north is called Horeb, that to the east the Mount of Moses, that to the south-west the Mount of Saint Catherine, after the Roman Catholic saint of that name. In the books of the Old Testament the name of Serbal is not found. Those of Sinai and Horeb occur, indeed, often enough; but it is exceedingly difficult to make out the relation in which they were supposed to stand to each other. It is evident not only that the writers had never visited these mountains themselves, but that they had formed no clear conception of the places of which they were speaking; for they sometimes mention "the mountain of God" as if there were but one mountain in the southern portion of the Sinaitic peninusla that could be so described; and yet the one speaks of Sinai, where the other (the Deuteronomist) speaks of Horeb. But the desert in which the mountains lay is always called the desert of Sinai.

It is but natural that travellers in the East should have felt a deep interest both in Sinai and Serbal, and that many of them should have scaled these mountains in hopes of discovering, if possible, the scene of the wonders recorded in Exodus. As long as the whole narrative was accepted as historical, of course these places had an irresistible hold on the imagination; and, even now, though we can trace the influence of unhistorical legends in the story, and are driven to admit that it is quite impossible to recover the details of all that took place among these mountains, yet we know that the alliances formed, the resolutions made, the revelations communicated, and the laws issued there, were of the utmost importance, and, in short, that Horeb played a prominent part in the education of Israel.

We may now go on to the examination of certain old accounts of these events. As usual, they are interwoven one with another, but we shall give them each by itself, and without the additions afterwards made to it. The first, then, runs as follows:[1]—

From Rephidim the Israelites journeyed to the desert of Sinai. When they had pitched their camp there Moses went up to the seat of God, the summit of Mount Horeb.

[1] Exodus xix. 2a, 3a, 9a, 13b, 14, 17, 19; xxiv. 1, 9–11; xxxiii. 7–11; Numbers xii.

There Yahweh said to him: "I will come to you in a cloud of smoke, so that the people may hear when I speak to you, and may always believe your words henceforth. When the sound of the trumpet ceases, they must ascend the mountain." As soon as he had heard these words, Moses went down the mountain to the camp again, and prepared the people, by a religious consecration, to meet Yahweh; ordering them, amongst other things, to wash all their clothes. When the Israelites had been thus purified, Moses led them to meet the deity, and drew them up at the foot of the mountain. Then a terrific trumpet-blast was heard, and Moses spoke to God, and he answered him with an audible voice.

Then Yahweh told Moses to come up to his dwelling-place, together with Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel. The others were to worship from a distance, while Moses was to draw near to Yahweh alone. Those who were thus privileged above the rest made use of the permission given them, and actually saw the god of Israel, under whose feet was stretched a pavement as of sapphires, clear and transparent as the heavens themselves. He did them no harm in any way, but treated them as his guests, and they joined in a meal and rejoiced in his presence.

When the people had witnessed the conversation held between Moses and Yahweh, at the foot of Mount Horeb, they were convinced that Yahweh had really chosen Moses to represent him, and they observed with awe how their god held constant intercourse with him. For Moses had pitched a tent at a considerable distance outside the camp, and called it the "tent of conference," because it was there that he "conferred" with Yahweh. So any one who wanted to consult the oracle had to go to this tent; and when Moses came there the Israelites stood at the entrance of their tents and gazed after him in reverence, until he entered the consecrated dwelling. Their awe-struck wonder was not groundless, for no sooner had Moses disappeared behind the curtain than the pillar of cloud came down and stood before the entrance of the tent. Yahweh was speaking to Moses! No wonder that when the people saw it a tremor of sacred awe passed over them, and they threw themselves down upon the earth, each one before his tent! Yes! Yahweh was speaking to Moses, face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. After that Moses came back to the camp, while his faithful servant, Joshua, the son of Nun, remained in the tent.

Even Moses' sister, Miriam, was made to feel on one

occasion that Yahweh had indeed chosen Moses to represent him, and was prepared to support his servant's dignity. Miriam and Aaron were indignant with Moses for having married an Ethiopian wife. It was a constant source of irritation to them, and made it all the harder for them to acquiesce in the extraordinary privileges which he enjoyed. "What!" said they, "Is Yahweh to speak through Moses only, and not through us? How he lords it over us!" Now Moses was gentle beyond description, so he let them say all this without a protest. But not so Yahweh. He suddenly commanded them, "Go to the tent of conference, you three — Moses, Aaron, and Miriam;" and as soon as they had obeyed, the pillar of cloud came down and Yahweh placed himself, as was his wont, at the entrance. Then he called Aaron and Miriam outside the tent, and said in a voice of anger: "Listen to me! If a prophet of Yahweh rises among you, I reveal myself to him in a vision or a dream. But with my servant Moses, whom I have placed over all I have, it is otherwise. With him I speak mouth to mouth. I give him no dark answers to his questions, but he sees the form of Yahweh clearly. Had you no fear of speaking against my servant Moses?" So, for once, Aaron and Miriam had had one of those interviews with Yahweh at the entrance of the tent which had made them so envious of their brother. But, alas! it would have been better for them had it been withheld; for Yahweh had spoken to them in wrath, and hardly had he ended before the pillar of cloud rose up once more, leaving the brother and sister who had been thus rebuked gazing in dumb bewilderment one upon the other. Then a great horror fell upon them, for Miriam was white as snow with leprosy, and must be condemned to live outside the camp in a state of life-in-death, while every one would shrink from her as from something unclean. Thus enduring the agony of a thousand deaths, she must drag out her wretched existence year after year. Bewildered and terrified Aaron turned to Moses, the brother he had so deeply injured, and cried imploringly: "Oh, master! deal not with us as our folly and our sin deserve. Look upon her! Leave her not in this pitiable plight." His appeal to the forgiving spirit of Moses was not in vain, for he threw himself to the earth and prayed, "O Yahweh, do but heal her!" His god could not resist his supplication. He was willing to restore Miriam, but yet could not allow her to escape altogether unpunished. "Sup-

pose," he said, "her father had spit in her face because she had disobeyed him, would she not have been unclean, and compelled to keep away from every one for seven days? Let her be treated as a leper then for seven days, and after that she shall be healed." They did as Yahweh had said; and since the Israelites had already broken up from Sinai when this took place, they had to halt and delay their journey seven days. Then Miriam was restored.

These stories embrace some of the most ancient traditions of the Israelites concerning the sojourn of their ancestors in the desert. In some cases their brevity makes them obscure. The statement, for instance, that Moses had married an Ethiopian wife comes upon us as a surprise, for it cannot be Zipporah who is meant, since she was a Midianite, and therefore a descendant of Abraham.[1] As for Miriam, the old legends have nothing more to tell us of her, except that she led the Israelites in raising a song of triumph (being Aaron's sister and a prophetess, it is added[2]), and that she died.[3] In the legend of the childhood of Moses, a sister who watched the basket is mentioned, but the name of Miriam does not occur. The little that is told of her hardly explains the importance attached to her by the prophet Micah, who says, when speaking of Israel's deliverance from Egypt,[4] "I, Yahweh, sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam before you;" but she probably filled a more prominent place in the popular traditions than she does in those that have been put into writing and handed down to us.

In one respect the review just given leaves a different impression from that produced by simply reading the narrative in Exodus as it stands — drawn as it has been from various sources, and more than once remodelled — I mean with regard to the events that took place at Sinai. Another legend runs as follows:[5] —

In the third month after their escape from Egypt, the Israelites came to the desert of Sinai and encamped over against the mountain. Then Yahweh called to Moses from the top of the mountain and said: "Say to the house of Jacob, 'You have seen how I have chastised Egypt, and taken you up as on the wings of an eagle and brought you here. And now if you will hear me and keep my commandments, you above all peoples shall be my peculiar possession,

[1] Genesis xxv. 2. [2] Exodus xv. 20. [3] Numbers xx. 1.
[4] Micah vi. 4. [5] Exodus xix. 1, 2b, 3b–8, 10–13a, 15, 16, 18; xx. 18–26.

for all the earth is mine. You shall be my kingdom of priests and a holy people.' Speak these words to them."

In obedience to this command, Moses called the elders of Israel together and communicated the words of God to them, and they declared with one voice: "All that Yahweh has said we will do." When Moses brought this answer to his god, he ordered him to sanctify the people for two days, in order that they might be ready on the third day to see Yahweh, who would then come down upon Sinai in the sight of all Israel. Moreover, Moses was to warn the people, on pain of death, not to ascend the mountain, or even to touch it. Man or beast transgressing this command must be stoned to death or shot through with arrows. Moses faithfully reported all this to the people. On the third day, accordingly, early in the morning, fear and terror fell upon the people in the camp, for heavy peals of thunder rolled and fierce lightning flashed all round about, and a dark cloud settled upon the mountain, while the echoing sound of a mighty trumpet filled the air. All Sinai smoked like a furnace, and Yahweh came down in a glow of fire, and the Israelites trembled when they saw it. The peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, the sound of the trumpet and the clouds of smoke, went on with no abatement till the people fled in terror, and only dared to stand still at a distance. Then they said to Moses: "Do you speak to us! We will hearken to you. But let not God speak to us any more, or we shall perish!" "Fear not," answered Moses, "God has come to try you, that you may fear him and may not sin." But the people kept standing afar off, while Moses went up into the darkness which was the abode of the deity. There he received certain commandments to give to the people.

The digression[1] about fencing round the mountain to prevent the people from ascending it is hardly consistent with the account of the terror which laid hold of them, and is a later addition to the narrative. A more important point to notice is that neither in this account nor in the one previously given is there the least indication that Yahweh on this occasion proclaimed with his own mouth the code of the "ten commandments." This conception is indeed found in Deuteronomy,[2] and even in the book of Exodus in its present form; but it is evident that it was not a part of the most ancient legends. In the first of these Yahweh himself says[3] that he will come down in the pillar of cloud in order

[1] Exodus xix. 20–25. [2] Deuteronomy v. [3] Exodus xix. 9.

that the Israelites may believe in Moses, when they have seen that Yahweh speaks with him. In the second the same object is actually accomplished, though not announced, beforehand; for the people flee in terror, and say to Moses, "Let not Yahweh speak to us or we shall die. Do you speak to us!" It was not till after this that Moses went up to the abode of Yahweh.[1]

The various legends of which we have spoken illustrate the different ideas which the Israelites formed of their god, Yahweh, at different periods. The representations according to which he reveals himself in the pillar of cloud, speaks to Moses in the hearing of the multitude, converses with him face to face, and is even seen by Aaron and his sons and by seventy elders, are more ancient than those in which he descends upon Sinai as a consuming fire, begirt with thunder and lightning. To this latter narrative, with the commandments given to Moses by Yahweh, we shall recur at greater length in another connection. We shall then have to speak of the covenant made between Yahweh and Israel, of the apostasy of the people which followed it, and of Yahweh's appearance to Moses.[2] At present we will only speak of the object of all the legends we have given. It is the same in every case, viz., to point to Moses as the representative of Yahweh.

The Israelites of after centuries looked upon Moses as their great lawgiver, the deliverer and leader of his people, the founder of the whole social and religious life of the sons of Israel; but at the same time they did not suppose him to have thought out for himself, or to have drawn from his own inward experience, the truths which he taught his contemporaries, and which they handed down to posterity. They believed, on the other hand, that he owed them to a special revelation from his god. It was upon this belief that his authority was made to rest. If he had invented these religious laws and social regulations himself, it would have been open to others to dispute their justice or authority. But it was not so. Yahweh had spoken to him, face to face, in the darkness on the mountain, and in the pillar of cloud before the tent. His contemporaries had actually heard how God spoke to him. The people had witnessed the descent of Yahweh in thunder and lightning. Three-and-seventy of

[1] Exodus xx. 18–21.
[2] Exodus xxiv. 3–8; xxxi. 18–xxxiii. 6, 12–xxxiv. 35.

the most distinguished and trustworthy of the Israelites had even seen the god of Israel with their own eyes. Nay, for weeks, months, years in succession, all who dwelt in the camp had looked on with awe as the pillar of cloud placed itself in front of the tent of conference. Unbounded confidence must be placed in Moses, therefore, and everything which he had commanded must be accepted as God's word, just as it stood.

No one who has any knowledge of antiquity will be surprised at this, for similar beliefs were very common. All peoples who had issued from a condition of barbarism and acquired regular political institutions, more or less elaborate laws, an established worship, and maxims of morality, attributed all this — their birth as a nation, so to speak — to one or more great men, all of whom, without exception, were supposed to have received their knowledge from some deity. Whence did Zarathustra (Zoroaster), the prophet of the Persians, derive his religion? According to the belief of his followers, and the doctrines of their sacred writings, it was from Ahuramazda (Ormuzd) the god of light. Why did the Egyptians represent the god Thoth with a writing-tablet and a pencil in his hand, and honor him especially as the god of the priests? — Because he was "the lord of the divine word," the fountain of all wisdom, from whose inspiration the priests, who were the scholars, the lawgivers, and the religious teachers of the people, derived all their wisdom. Was not Minos, the lawgiver of the Cretans, the friend of Zeus, the highest of the gods? Nay, was he not even his son, and did he not ascend to the sacred cave on Mount Dicte to bring down the laws which his god had placed there for him? From whom did the Spartan lawgiver, Lycurgus, himself say that he had obtained his laws? — From no other than the god Apollo. The Roman legend, too, in honoring Numa Pompilius as the people's instructor, at the same time ascribed all his wisdom to his intercourse with the nymph Egeria. It was the same elsewhere; and to take one more example — this from later times — Mohammed not only believed himself to have been called immediately by God to be the prophet of the Arabs, but declared that he had received every page of the Koran from the hand of the angel Gabriel.

The ancients would hardly have ascribed such a superhuman origin to the laws and doctrines of the founders of their religions unless they had already believed that their gods did from time

to time directly reveal themselves to special individuals. This belief, however, they held most firmly. Feeling their own weakness, knowing how little knowledge there was of God and of divine things in their own souls, they drew a sharp line between that which came from man and that which came from the deity. From man proceeded all that was perverse, unclean, and sinful; while all that was true and pure had its origin above. There was constant need, therefore, of direct revelation from the higher powers; and this need was satisfied amongst nations of the most diverse character by oracles and witchcraft, and amongst the Israelites especially by the preaching of the prophets, who were bound above all things not to utter what seemed good to their own hearts, but to deliver what Yahweh taught them. Since the ancients, then, were not only keenly alive to the need of immediate revelations, but also believed that they were as a fact constantly vouchsafed to men, it is not surprising that they should look upon all that their greatest religious teachers and lawgivers had done for posterity as the fruit of such intercourse with the gods.

The question whether the founders of religions themselves shared these beliefs and imagined themselves to stand in immediate communication with their god need not be answered at present, as we shall have abundant opportunity of dealing with the subject when we come to speak of the prophets. At present we need only point out the insecurity of a religious or political institution which is made to rest upon these supernatural revelations. As long as every one runs in the old groove, repeats what others have said, and holds by everything that has once got established, the danger is not perceived. But as soon as any one tries to give himself an account of his beliefs and actions, he feels the ground sink beneath his feet. Why did the Israelite worship Yahweh as the god of his people? Why did he obey his laws? Because Yahweh had spoken to Moses. But how did he know that this was a fact? By the old traditions which bore witness to his holding converse with Moses in a pillar of cloud, and to his having been seen by Aaron and his companions. But a cultivated Israelite of the ninth century before Christ could no longer believe this. His idea of the nature of Yahweh was too sublime to admit of such a thought; for no one could see him with impunity, but whosoever looked upon him died. Under the influence of this new conviction arose another conception, according to which Yahweh revealed himself in thunder and lightning, and the people, in terror lest they should be destroyed, and

convinced that it was indeed Yahweh, entreated Moses to interpret the commandments of God to them. Afterwards, even this representation ceased to be satisfactory. The divine origin of the most important Mosaic ordinances, the ten commandments, must be still better guaranteed. Thus rose the account of Deuteronomy, in which Yahweh proclaims the ten commandments with an audible voice, so that all Israel heard it. Hence it is that three mutually exclusive representations came into circulation, all of which have been preserved, placed side by side, and worked up into a single narrative. But all this could furnish no basis for the faith of any thoughtful man. Nor could contact with a worshipper of some other god fail to stimulate reflection. The Israelite in the Babylonian captivity, who spoke on religious subjects with a worshipper of Ahuramazda, must have had his ideas strangely confused. "Yahweh spoke to Moses," said one. "Ahuramazda taught Zarathustra," said the other. Either there must be more than one god, then, which the cultivated Judæan of the sixth century before Christ no longer believed, or else the Persians were the followers of a deceiver. One or other of these alternatives must be accepted. This was a fruitful source of intolerance; and if the Judæan afterwards thought the whole matter out, and became aware of the inconsistencies in the tradition, his religion was completely undermined, and he was in great danger of falling into unbelief. Many a one in earlier and later times, and even in our own days, has lost his faith in this way.

Let us beware, then, of resting our religious convictions upon supernatural revelations! "But was not Moses sent by God?" it may be asked. Undoubtedly he was. "Did not God reveal a certain measure of truth to him?" Assuredly he did. Moses was one of those "children of the promise"[1] whom mankind has to thank for its religious progress. Amongst all peoples and in all ages there have been and still are such men. But though the revelation which falls to their lot may be higher than that of others to whom they serve as guides, yet it is not different in kind, it is not supernatural. That which is true and good commends itself, by its own excellence, to the reason and conscience of every one who unites the power of perceiving the truth to a love of the truth when perceived, and who strives after purity of heart. By this means each one of us may receive revelations from God.

[1] See pp. 142, 143.

Chapter VIII.

THE FORTY YEARS WANDERING.

Deut. I. 1–II. 1.

WE are now acquainted with the first and with part of the second book of the Pentateuch.[1] The rest of the book of Exodus is taken up partly by a few narratives, of which we shall speak hereafter, and a short code of laws; but chiefly by the description of a sanctuary, commonly called the tabernacle; that is, "the tent." This tabernacle, however, never really existed except in the imagination of the writer of the "Book of Origins," who gives us a detailed account of its shape and measurements, as well as the materials of which, he says, it was made. The third book, which is called Leviticus, after the priestly tribe of the Levites, embraces a number of religious laws of very various dates, chiefly, however, from the first centuries after the captivity. They deal more especially with the regulation of the forms of worship. The fourth book is called Numbers, from the great quantity of figures which occur in it, especially in the early chapters, where the writer of the "Book of Origins" gives us a representation, which he had invented and worked out himself, of the camp of the Israelites, and the numerical strength of each tribe. The book also contains sundry laws and certain narratives, of which we shall have occasion to speak elsewhere. The fifth book of the Pentateuch is Deuteronomy, most of which was written in the time of Josiah, and formed the basis of his reformation.[2] In it Moses is represented as addressing the Israelites, shortly before the conquest of Canaan, and impressing Yahweh's commandments upon them. Hence the name Deuteronomy, which means "Repetition of the Law."

The names of these five books are taken from the Latin translation of the Bible, which the Roman Catholic Church recognizes as the official and only pure version of the Scriptures. It is commonly called the "Vulgate;" *i.e.*, "the generally spread." The "Vulgate," in its turn, borrowed these titles from the Greek translation.

In the form in which we now possess the book of Deuteronomy, the legislation is preceded by an introduction, in

[1] See p. 42. [2] See p. 26.

which the writer reviews, under the person of Moses, all that took place between Yahweh's revelation at Horeb and Israel's entrance into the promised land. He only takes up such portions of the current accounts of this period as appear to him of peculiar interest, and places all he tells us in the special light of his own conception of history. Amongst other things he gives us the following: —

When the Israelites had remained long enough at Horeb, they broke up their camp at the command of Yahweh, and journeyed northwards, through the desert, along Mount Seir, in order to take possession of Canaan, the land which their god had promised to their fathers. When they were ready for the journey, Moses complained that he could not permanently look after all the people, and urged the Israelites to select leaders for the tribes, clans, and smaller divisions. This plan was highly approved of, and Moses carried it out in the name of the people. He exhorted the judges to pronounce impartial sentences, remembering that their utterance was a decision of God, and to refer the most difficult causes to him. He then issued a number of additional commandments, and after that they broke up their camp.

Journeying through the wilderness from Horeb eleven days, they came to Kedesh-Barnea, on the southern boundary of Canaan. "Rise up, now!" cried Moses to them, "behold the land of promise! Fear nothing, for Yahweh has given it to you." But the Israelites came to him as one man and said: "Let us be cautious, and send spies first. For we must learn which way we must take and what cities we shall come to." Moses gave his consent, and the voice of prudence was obeyed; but, alas! it was but the first timid indication of want of faith in Yahweh's almighty help, the prelude to an absolute refusal to hearken to his decrees!

Twelve men, one from each tribe, were sent to reconnoitre the land. They penetrated as far as to Hebron, surveyed everything carefully, and even brought specimens of the fruits of the country back with them, and gave an account of what they had seen. In many respects their report was most favorable. It was a glorious country that Yahweh had destined for his people. But could they conquer it? A mighty people dwelt there, more powerful than Israel; and their great cities were rendered yet more formidable by their massive walls and gates. Nay, worse than all, a race of giants, the Anakites, dwelt there. When the people heard this their hearts sank within them, and cries of woe rang

through the camp. "Yahweh hates us," they exclaimed. "He has brought us out of Egypt to give us into the hands of the Amorites, that they may slay us. What are we to do?" In vain did Moses endeavor to calm the panic-stricken people. All his attempts to revive their faith in Yahweh's power were fruitless. "Remember," he said, "all that took place in Egypt! Did not Yahweh, your god, fight for you? And in the desert was he not like a father to you, taking up his child in his arms and carrying him over every dangerous place? Did he not show you the way, and find you a place to encamp in every evening? Did he not go before you by night in a pillar of flame and by day in a pillar of cloud? Why do you not trust him, then?" It was of no avail. The people were overcome with terror. They would listen neither to Moses nor to Caleb, the only one of the spies who urged them to be of good courage. They refused to attack the land of Canaan.

Then Yahweh was full of anger, and swore: "Not one of this wicked generation, except Caleb, shall enter the good land that I have promised to their fathers. Even you, O Moses, shall die in the desert, for the sin of your people. Bid Joshua be of good cheer, for he shall bring Israel into Canaan. As for you, O Israel, since you will not go forward, turn back into the desert to the Red Sea again." Humbled by these words of reproof, and fearing what might follow, the people came to themselves again. They confessed their fault, and declared that they were ready to obey the commands of Yahweh and to set out at once. Nay, in their fickleness, they were even now girding on their weapons. But it was too late. Yahweh said to Moses: "Forbid them to set out, for they will be defeated now, since I am not with them." But just as they had before refused to make ready for the battle, so now they refused to draw back, and full of empty confidence they rushed upon the nearest city. But their rashness cost them dear, for the Amorites drove them back, and surrounding the fugitives on every side, like swarms of bees pursuing a foe, made them pay a heavy price for their folly. This event took place at Zephath, afterwards called Hormah.

Humbled and dejected they returned to the camp, but Yahweh gave them no consolation. For a long time they remained at Kedesh, and no divine direction was vouchsafed to them. At last they were told to return southwards on the way by which they had come, along Mount Seir, then north-

wards again, then back once more, and so on, backwards and forwards long, long years in succession.

This account of the journey of the spies and of the unsuccessful attack upon Zephath is based upon another legend in which the same thing is described, and of which we shall have to speak hereafter. It is found in another part of the Bible,[1] interwoven with narratives of later origin, and makes Caleb, who is only mentioned incidentally in Deuteronomy, much more prominent. We have remarked more than once already that the Israelites never wrote history simply to preserve the memory of the past, but that all their narratives had some special object — whether edifying, religious, or political. So in the present instance the writer's convictions shine clearly enough through his narrative. His spirit is evidently akin to that of the great prophets who preached in Judah from the eighth century onwards. "Whoever trusts in Yahweh is helped by him." Of that he was certain. So Israel, having reached the boundaries of Canaan, had only to fall upon it. The people had so little faith as to desire to send spies in advance; but such a plan would never have occurred to Moses himself. Our writer does not stay to inquire whether Israel's fear of the Canaanites was well founded; and though he says that the Israelites were as many in number as the stars of heaven,[2] yet elsewhere, in the same book, he declares that the Canaanites were far stronger than Israel.[3] But he does not take this into account here; for Yahweh, the consuming fire, went before them and would destroy their foes.[4] They had no reason, then, to fear.

If this is the spirit of the narrative we can easily understand the object with which it was written. The thoughtful Israelite who had faith in Yahweh must often have been perplexed by the question: "Why did our ancestors wander about so long in the desert before they found a dwelling-place in Canaan?" Of course we may be content with the simple answer: "Either because they had no wish to bid adieu to their wandering life, or else — which is nearer the truth — because they saw no chance of conquering any country." But such an answer was by no means satisfactory to the Israelitish believer; for Yahweh, the supreme god, had promised Canaan to the patriarchs; and the Israelites therefore came out of Egypt with the express purpose of taking pos-

1 Numbers xiii. and xiv.
2 Deuteronomy i. 10.
3 Deuteronomy ix. 1, 2.
4 Deuteronomy ix. 3.

session of it. Why did they not enter it at once? Was not Yahweh powerful enough to enable them to do so? Such a supposition would be blasphemous. Had he broken his oath, then? Impossible! There was only one conceivable explanation, and that was that the people had sinned. Nor had any sin ever given rise to so much evil as had been produced by want of faith and trust in Yahweh's might and the cowardice that resulted from it. This sin, then, must have caused the delay. The writer's chief object was to bring all this clearly to light; and that is why he insists so strongly that when once Yahweh had declared that Israel must wander in the desert till a new generation had risen up, any further attempt to penetrate into Canaan was useless and even criminal.

Thus the writer of Deuteronomy placed the past before his readers in the peculiar light shed upon it by his own beliefs. It is our task to endeavor to recover what actually took place, in the full conviction that in the long run the truth will serve to glorify God better than the most beautifully colored fiction.

First of all, then, we must ask what length of time elapsed between the exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. The prophet Amos[1] is the first who says that Yahweh led Israel in the desert for forty years; but in doing so he does not mean to make an accurate statement of the length of time, but only to signify in general terms that it was a long period, lasting through a whole generation. This round number[2] was afterwards taken literally, and it was supposed that forty years to a day elapsed between the exodus from Egypt and the passage into Canaan.[3] If this "forty," however, is only a round number, we may suppose the actual period of wandering to have been rather more or rather less; and there is one circumstance which pleads for the supposition that it was rather over than under. For Ramses III., one of the successors of the Egyptian king Menephthah, under whose reign the Israelites obtained their freedom, made war upon the inhabitants of Canaan; yet the Hebrews or Israelites do not occur amongst the tribes he overthrew, as enumerated in the inscriptions on his monuments, nor have the Israelites themselves preserved any recollection of these wars. We may be sure, therefore, that at that time they had not yet settled in Canaan. Now this expedition took place between 1280 and 1260, and since the Israelites left Egypt about 1320, we

[1] Amos ii. 10, v. 25. [2] See p. 249. [3] Joshua v. 6, 10.

may suppose that they spent about half a century in the desert.

Half a century in the desert! The story has often been called incredible, and, indeed, it really is utterly inconceivable if we adopt the usual representation of the affair. Even if we put the numbers of the Israelites far below those given by the "Book of Origins," nay, even if we accept as history the stories of the dew of manna, and the shower of quails and the waters flowing from rocks, — it is still impossible to accept the story, since the peninsula of Sinai was too small and barren to support the Israelites in addition to the other tribes who lived there. At any rate, their flocks would be able to find no pasture there. But we may understand "the desert" to include the great plains stretching east of Palestine, which we have already described,[1] and in that case there would be room enough in it.

If we are to suppose, however, that the Israelite tribes maintained themselves in these regions, we must once for all break with the representation of their life in the desert given us in the Pentateuch. According to its narratives the Israelites proceeded as a single army, marching in a certain fixed order, and resting in one general camp. These narratives represent them as a thoroughly well-organized people.

Let us look into some of the stories which present this picture to us.

We will first examine the beginning of the story with which we opened this chapter, and which we find at greater length elsewhere.[2] When the Israelites, we are told, had escaped from Egypt and reached Mount Horeb, Moses was rejoiced by a visit from his father-in-law, who came to bring him his wife, Zipporah, and her two sons, Gershom and Eliëzer. Jethro, delighted by all that Moses told him of the severity with which Yahweh had treated Egypt for Israel's sake, acknowledged that Yahweh was supreme above all gods, and offered a great sacrifice to him, inviting the leading Israelites to the feast which formed a part of it. Then, on the following day, he saw Moses at his work. From morning till night he had to administer justice. "How is this?" asked Jethro in surprise. "I cannot help it," answered Moses; "every one comes to me for oracles. Whatever difficulty they have to settle they bring it before me. They call upon me to decide all their differences, and

[1] See pp. 128, 129.

[2] Exodus xviii.; compare Deuteronomy i. 9–18 (see p. 305).

to make known the commandments of God." But his father-in-law thought this most foolish, for Moses, he thought, would never be able to support the work. It was far too heavy for one man. "Attend to my advice," he said, "and may God be with you! Be their mediator with God. Speak of their interests with him; and, on the other hand, make known his will to the Israelites. All this really is necessary. But select men of understanding, who fear God, who will behave honestly and not allow themselves to be bribed, and make them heads of thousands and hundreds and fifties and tens. Let them administer justice as a rule, and only submit the more difficult cases to your decision. In this way they can easily lighten your burden. If you do this, God will give you strength to continue your work, and the people will reach the place of their destination." Moses accepted this sensible advice, and gave effect to it at once. Then Jethro returned home.

This narrative obviously treats the Israelites on their arrival at Horeb as a well-organized and duly subdivided nation, with an established government, enjoying the blessings of a regular administration of justice and capable of advancing or halting as a single man.

Nor does the writer of the "Book of Origins" allow us to doubt for a moment that this was really his idea of the march of the Israelites. For he carefully enumerates all the places at which they halted,[1] gives in elaborate detail[2] the numbers of each tribe, the bearers of the banner of each, and the order in which they were ranged round the tabernacle. Nay, he even mentions the signal to be sounded on the sacred trumpets, at which the various tribes were to commence their march.[3] The larger we suppose the army of the Israelites, the more absurd does this representation appear; especially when we remember that the women and children marched with the men capable of bearing arms, and that they had to take all their possessions and all their flocks with them. And this for forty years!

We shall probably not be far wrong if we suppose the course of events to have been something as follows: When the tribes had shaken off the yoke of Egypt, they tried to make good their escape. The greater part of them apparently turned southwards at first, then northwards from Sinai to the boundaries of Canaan. There they were repulsed and

[1] Numbers xxxiii. 1–49. [2] Numbers i. and ii.
[3] Numbers x. 1–8.

turned south again along the mountains of Edom, after which they entered the Eastern desert by the only pass which leads to Arabia Deserta, namely, that of Elath. And where next? Wherever they could find a subsistence! Some kept wandering about in the peninsula of Sinai. Some settled on the southern boundaries of Canaan or the western boundaries of Seir, and entered into alliances with the native peoples. Some wandered to the east, as far as the Euphrates; others to the south, and who knows where they may have found a dwelling-place at last? others to the north, till they came upon the land of Moab. But although it was impossible for any of the tribes to remain near together, on account of the pasturage they required for their flocks, yet some of them kept up a close connection with each other. They stood by each other, took common counsel, and allowed themselves to be led by Moses. Such, we may suppose, was the life of the refugees from Egypt for about half a century.

One word more. What an extraordinary and impossible representation both of Yahweh and of the people the narratives of the Pentateuch give us! On account of a fit of despondency which comes over the Israelites, Yahweh changes his plan. He had intended to bring them into Canaan, but now he will not let them enter it. They must die in the desert. In a still later account than that of Deuteronomy, this is taken so literally that all the Israelites who were above twenty years of age when they left Egypt, with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua, are made to die.[1] So Israel wandered from north to south and from south to north, backwards and forwards along the mountains of Edom, for eight and thirty years. Nothing happens during all this time. Not a single word is said about it. The people simply wandered up and down and — died out. Is such a thing conceivable? Not even bands of ascetics, whose self-inflicted penance has utterly deadened and stupefied them, have ever supported such a purposeless existence, such a veritable hell on earth. Can any one imagine a rough and warlike people enduring it for a single week? or feeling so much reverence and fear for the god whom they had only learned to serve a year ago as to submit to such an unbearable chastisement? It is vain to attempt to justify what we are told was God's action by supposing that he did it in order to humble and educate the Israelites, for a generation growing up amid such surroundings could not but be feeble and enervated. Surely

[1] Numbers xiv. 29, 30.

the true means of preparation for our work of life lies in attempting to find our own way, in advancing in spite of error, gaining wisdom through loss and shame, learning to see with our own eyes, and in joy and sorrow, in careful work and anxious thought, ever moving forward.

Such was really the education of the Israelites too. Instead of dreaming of a promised land, they looked round for the finest country they could master. No bread fell down from heaven for their food, and they found it toilsome work to seek out pasturage for their flocks, trying meanwhile to make allies of the inhabitants of the desert, such as the Midianites, that they might be their "eyes" or guides.[1]

God's glory in the guidance of Israel is not revealed in a people kept in leading strings and compelled to turn this way or that by physical expedients, but in the growth through the ages of so much that was glorious and noble out of those rude tribes seeking a fatherland.

Chapter IX.

THE WORK OF MOSES.

Deut. V. 6–21; Ex. XX. 2–17; Num. X. 33–36.

IT is due to Moses in the first instance that the uncivilized hordes that wandered through the Arabian deserts in the thirteenth century before Christ, and afterwards conquered Canaan, finally produced such noble results. We must therefore form as clear a conception of his work as possible, and must not allow ourselves to be misled by the Jewish tradition which ascribes to his hand the whole of the priestly legislation contained in the Pentateuch. In reality, it would be nearer the truth to call it the work of Ezra. The prophet Malachi,[2] who lived after the captivity, is the first to use the expression "law of Moses," and the only claim of the Jewish legislation to this title is derived from the fact that the religion it defined and regulated so minutely was originally founded by Moses. The worship of Yahweh, with "the Ten Commandments" as its fundamental code, is the chief legacy which Moses left his people.

[1] Numbers x. 29–32. [2] Malachi iv. 4.

Let us begin, then, by examining this code.

The ordinary expression "Ten *Commandments*" is hardly correct, since the first of the ten — "I, Yahweh, am your god" — is not a commandment at all. In the Hebrew they are called "the ten *words*," for the expression *word* is often used in Hebrew, as it is in several modern languages, for a short sentence as well as for a single word. Unfortunately we have no similar expression in English, and shall therefore be obliged to retain the incorrect form, "ten commandments," except when we use the Greek word Decálogus or Décalogue. The Decalogue, then, occurs twice in the Bible, and, as the two versions differ in certain points, we see that we no longer have it in its original form. It is remarkable, too, that while many of the commandments, such as "Thou shalt do no murder," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," are very short, others, on the contrary, especially those referring to the worship of images and the observance of the sabbath, are worked out at considerable length. The two versions of the ten commandments give different reasons for observing the holy day. According to the earlier version, that of Deuteronomy, the male and female slaves, as well as their masters, were to be exempt from work on the "sabbath" day (that is the day "of rest"), for the Iraelites must think how they had once been slaves themselves in Egypt. Here, therefore, the commandment rests upon principles of humanity. According to Exodus, on the other hand, the Israelites must observe the day of rest because God created heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh. Here there is an obvious reference to the first account of the creation, which was part of the "Book of Origins." Now it seems highly improbable that this commandment, together with those about the worship of images and the honor due to parents, should from the first have been so elaborate, while the rest were so short; and we have every reason to suppose that they were all equally short originally, and that these elaborations are of later date.

How the commandments are to be divided and the number ten retained, is a question of the greatest difficulty.

The precept against covetousness has long been divided into two; the first words, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house," being counted as the ninth, and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his land, nor his male or female slave, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is

thy neighbor's," as the tenth commandment. The opening words of the code, "I, Yahweh, am your god," together with the prohibition of the service of other gods and the worship of images, are then thrown into one first commandment. This division is most unnatural; and if we admit that originally the last commandment was simply "Thou shalt not covet," it is no longer possible to split it into two. It would scarcely have been worth while to mention this arrangement of the ten commandments if it were not the one adopted by the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran Churches. It explains the fact that sometimes, especially in German books, the commandment as to the sabbath is called the third instead of the fourth, as with us; the commandment to honor father and mother the fourth instead of the fifth, and so on. But we need not dwell upon this point any longer.

There is no special difficulty in arranging and numbering the last eight commandments. The third is, "Take not the name of Yahweh deceitfully," that is, "take no false oath:" the fourth — to which we shall return presently — "Keep the day of rest holy;" the fifth enjoins respect not only for the father, but also for the mother, which is very remarkable when we consider the antiquity of the code; the sixth, seventh, and eighth forbid murder, adultery, and theft; the ninth teaches that less open attacks, by means of false witnesses before the judge, are equally hateful to Yahweh; while the tenth, which condemns covetousness, appears to be the fruit of a much higher moral development than that implied by the rest, for it condemns not only the evil deed but the ungenerous disposition.

This last commandment and perhaps some of the others may give rise to many questions, but at any rate there is no difficulty in counting them. This cannot be said of the two first, for even when we have dropped the long digression upon the worship of images, there are still three distinct sentences left, namely, "I, Yahweh, am thy god;" "Thou shalt have no other gods by my side;" and "Thou shalt not make any image of a god." How are we to escape from this difficulty? The division usually adopted in England follows Josephus and other ancient writers in taking the words "I, Yahweh, am thy god" as a sort of heading to the whole code rather than one of its clauses, and making the first commandment forbid the service of other gods, and the second the worship of images. The Jews, on the other hand, count "I am the Lord, thy god" as the first commandment; and are doubtless

right in so doing. This point was indeed the most important of all; and had to be kept before the Israelites more emphatically than anything else. Those who regard it as a sort of heading or introduction go on the supposition that it would be taken as a matter of course, and did not need to be taught as something new, but simply to be brought to mind. But this idea is quite incorrect, for if there was one thing new in the ten commandments it was this recognition of Yahweh as the god who had redeemed Israel.[1]

Our only course, then, is to make "Thou shalt have no other gods by my side, nor make any image of a god" the second commandment; and this is what the Jews still do. But this is not *one* commandment. The worship of other gods besides Yahweh is something quite distinct from the worship of images. How is it that these two precepts have been fused together? When the Israelites had risen to the belief in one God who had created heaven and earth, and of whom no image could be made, they made no distinction between the worship of other gods and the worship of images; and we need not be surprised, therefore, to find the two precepts treated as one in the versions of the ten commandments which we still possess. But in earlier times the distinction was still clearly felt, and the two commandments could not then have been run together. Probably one of them is a later addition to the other, but it is very difficult to say which. Most of the scholars who admit that we must make a choice between them, reject the commandment against the worship of images as not having been uttered by Moses. But there is just as much, or perhaps more, reason to suppose that the commandment forbidding the worship of other gods is of later date. This at least is certain, that, as far as we can make out, there was a party amongst the Israelites, dating from the time of Moses, that zealously opposed the use of images of gods, so that we are safe in saying that the school of Moses was characterized by its aversion to the worship of images. Whereas it is clear that, during the first centuries after Moses, no one ever thought of worshipping Yahweh alone, far less of denying the existence of all other gods. Indeed, this latter doctrine is not even taught in the commandment in its present form; for the very prohibition to worship other gods is a tacit admission of their existence, or at any rate does not deny it. No doubt, however, the precept to worship only one god paved the way to the belief that there is but one.

[1] See pp. 285-287.

In the spirit of these ten commandments Moses labored among the sons of Israel; but in order to comprehend the true value of his work, we must examine the character of the tribes he had rescued from Egypt. They called themselves the sons of Israel, but we must not for a moment suppose that they were all of the same origin. Certain old Egyptian stories say that the ancestors of the Israelites were leprous or unclean Egyptians, and although this is certainly untrue, there is no doubt that a good deal of Egyptian blood flowed in the veins of some of them. The Israelite legends themselves point to the same conclusion, for they represent Joseph as married to a daughter of the priest of On,[1] which we may take as an indication that the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were of mixed blood. We may draw similar conclusions from the story that Moses married an Ethiopian wife,[2] and the statement that a great "mixed multitude" came out with the sons of Israel.[3]

The Hebrews had intermarried not only with the Egyptians, but with other tribes related to themselves, such as the Midianites, — a fact to which the legend of the union of Moses and Zipporah refers;[4] and we may take for granted that during the half century between the exodus and the conquest of Canaan, they mingled with the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites as well. We shall see presently that in later times, when the Israelites attached the greatest importance to purity of descent, they still found it impossible to deny that large sections of the tribes were made up entirely of strangers. We must be careful not to form too high an opinion of the social condition of these tribes. They were but a mingled group of nomadic shepherds. And yet there was a nucleus amongst them of kindred spirits, who had acted in concert in Egypt, with whose leaders Moses had brought about the insurrection, upon whose support he could rely in the desert, and who doubtless closely resembled each other in religious ideas and usages. These families called themselves "the sons of Israel," and the rest were led by fear or self-interest to group themselves round them with or without their leave. Thus various tribes were formed, the most important of them being Judah, "the house of Joseph," and "the sons of Reuben," together with Simeon and Levi.

Now these sons of Israel, with their allies, had gods and religious customs of their own; and we must try to ascertain

[1] Genesis xli. 45.
[2] Numbers xii. 1.
[3] Exodus xii. 38; Numbers xi. 4.
[4] Exodus ii. 21.

their general character in order to form a better idea of the kind of people among whom Moses had to work.

At the time of the exodus the Israelites were worshippers of many gods. This would not necessarily follow from the admission of some of their later writers[1] that it was so, were it not obvious from the whole course of their history. While some of them worshipped stones and other such fetiches,[2] others adored the powers of Nature. The lowest stage of Nature-worship is the adoration of the moon, traces of which may be found among many different nations. The waning of the moon till she disappeared altogether was witnessed by them with amazement and alarm, and her reappearance greeted with festivities and acclamations of joy. This was the case among the Israelites too, and from the earliest times the feast of the new moon was held in high honor by them. It appears that the very name given to the desert of Sin and the mount of Sinai signifies the moon-god; and, if so, then one of the Canaanite tribes, that of the Sinites, derives its name from the same deity.

Probably not only the feast of the new moon but the celebration of the sabbath existed before the time of Moses. The origin of this usage cannot be explained with certainty. The week of seven days is not found elsewhere except among the Egyptians, and even there no day of rest was observed. It is quite possible that the sanctity of the number seven is connected with the worship of seven of the heavenly bodies — namely, the sun, the moon, and the planets Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn; and it appears that some of the families of the Israelites worshipped Saturn under the name of Kiwan, which may have given rise to the religious observance of the seventh day. If we look upon the week of seven days as a quarter of a month we may bring the observance of the sabbath into connection with the worship of the moon. But this is not a very probable theory, for it must soon have been discovered that the interval between the appearance of one new moon and that of the next was not precisely four times seven days. But whatever may have been the origin of the custom of observing the last day of every seven as holy, the Israelites themselves had already forgotten it. Whether they inherited the custom from their ancestors, or borrowed it from the Egyptians, they had learned quite early to observe it mechanically.

There are other ancient practices of the Israelites which

[1] Joshua xxiv. 14, 23; Ezekiel xx. 1 ff. [2] See pp. 175 ff.

are doubtless connected with Nature-worship. Such, for instance, are the separation between certain clean and unclean animals, the consecration of the tithes and of the first fruits of the harvest, the performance of religious ceremonies on the high places (bamahs), the use of images of the sun (chammanim), and of straight branches of trees stripped of their leaves and fixed near the altars (asherahs).

But the powers of Nature were worshipped by different peoples in very different ways. The worshippers of the heavenly bodies might regard the objects of their adoration under two aspects — as beneficent fruit-giving powers, or as stern destructive beings. The warmth of the sun, for instance, is sometimes fostering, but sometimes scorching; and the character of the worship of the sun-god depended upon whether he was regarded as a gracious and beneficent, or as a destructive and pitiless god. A fruit-giving deity loved to see his worshippers gentle and cultivated; was honored by scenes of joy and festivity, and was rather gratified than offended by the indulgence of sensual passions. Hence the tribes that worshipped the powers of Nature as friendly beings, attached great value to gentleness of manners, but gave themselves up in a shameless manner to the grossest inchastity, even in honor of the gods themselves. On the other hand a stern, destructive, cruel god was believed by his worshippers to delight in the development of their strength, in the sufferings they inflicted on themselves, and in the bloody sacrifices which they offered. Hence self-mutilation, human sacrifices, and abstinence from marriage in honor of the deity are found amongst them, and their manners are chaste and severe but cruel. Amongst the Semites, as amongst other peoples, we generally find a goddess by the side of each god. Thus the fostering sun-god, for example, is accompanied by the earth whom he fructifies, and the scorching destructive sun-god by the chaste and austere moon-goddess. It is but natural that we should often find both these conceptions adopted by the same peoples. In some cases, especially, when a people was composed of different elements, we find a temple consecrated to Moloch, for instance, the destructive god, who must be appeased by bloody sacrifices, and a pole standing by it dedicated to Mylitta, or Asherah, the goddess who delighted in sensual enjoyment. But it is also obvious that one of the two views would on the whole prevail in each nation according to its own character, the nature of the soil and climate of its abode, and the circumstances by which it was surrounded. Among the

Israelites too we find both sorts of religion, but it seems that they were most inclined to think of the gods as stern powers.

For instance, there is one of their ancient usages which has always awakened the deep interest of those who desire to comprehend the religion of Israel, and which points to this conception of the gods as austere beings. It is the custom of circumcision.

This strange and to us repulsive practice was performed by the Israelites upon their male children on the eighth day after their birth.[1] It was observed by many peoples to whom Israel was related; but amongst the Ishmaelites it was deferred till the boy was twelve or thirteen years old,[2] and amongst the Egyptians the priests alone had to undergo it. The origin of this curious usage is not known with certainty. In all probability it was originally a sacrifice to appease the stern deities.[3] An old tradition informs us that the Israelites neglected the circumcision in the wilderness, but were afterwards deeply ashamed of having done so, and as soon as they had restored the usage shouted in triumph, "This day is the reproach of Egypt turned away from us!" From this circumstance the place where it occurred is said to have derived its name of Gilgal, *i.e.* "turning away."[4] The Israelites were afterwards so proud of the circumcision that one of their bitterest terms of reproach was that of "uncircumcised."[5] They had forgotten the original meaning of the usage, however, and the "Book of Origins" tells us that Yahweh commanded Abraham to practise it as a sign of the covenant between himself and Abraham's posterity, but offers no explanation of it.[6] However little understood, the custom was handed down from generation to generation, and is still kept up by the Jews.

Not only the circumcision but the consecration of the first-born child to the deity[7] shows us that the ancient gods of the Israelites required cruel sacrifices from their worshippers; and we are led to the same conclusion by many other usages and by certain religious symbols which came down from the times before Moses. Such for instance are the *Ban*, and the image of a young bull, of which we shall have to speak again. We must never forget, however, that there can have been nothing like unity of ideas or usages amongst the hordes of

1 Leviticus xii. 3.
2 Genesis xvii. 25.
3 Exodus iv. 24–26.
4 Joshua v. 2–9.
5 2 Samuel i. 20, and elsewhere.
6 Genesis xvii.
7 See pp. 275, 276.

which the sons of Israel were the heart, as they gradually formed themselves into the various tribes. The most influential families doubtless worshipped the austere deities, of whom we have spoken, but not under the same names or by the same usages in all cases. Some of them worshipped Kiwan, while others bowed down before Molech — the former consecrating the last day of a week of seven days to their god, and the latter devoting the first-born of man and beast to theirs. Others again pleaded in word and deed for the worship of the more sensual deities, and celebrated the feast of the new moon in licentious dances and dissolute festivities. The future of these tribes depended largely upon the character of the gods in whose name they had been released from the land of slavery.

Now this god, as we know, was Yahweh, whose worship Moses introduced. He became the national god of Israel through the efforts of the same hero, and there is not the least doubt as to his character. He was an austere, a holy, and a fearful god. He must be appeased by offerings of blood: fire was his symbol,[1] and the firstborn of all living things must be devoted to him. A human being devoted to Yahweh must be put to death, and a city or country consecrated to him devastated and left untilled.

But the ten commandments taught that Yahweh must be served above all things by a moral life, and that is one of the noblest features of the work of Moses. The Israelite was commanded in the name of Yahweh to reverence his parents, to hold the life, the wedlock, and the property of his neighbor sacred, to injure nobody by lying words, and even to restrain his covetous desires. The last commandment is the hardest to explain; for "not to covet" is such a far-reaching and exalted commandment that we should not have expected to find it in the mouth of Moses, for the early Israelite moralists were content to condemn the evil deed without speaking of the principle from which it flowed. It is generally supposed, therefore, that it is simply meant to forbid the use of dishonest trickery for the sake of gain; and, at any rate, we must not lay too much stress on the penetrating nature of the tenth commandment, since it stands almost alone. But, independently of this doubtful point, the fundamental code of Israel deserves our admiration, on account of the close connection which it establishes between the worship of Yahweh and a moral life.

[1] See pp. 123–125.

The gods of many other peoples were as austere as Yahweh; but their austerity only made their worshippers seek to honor them by shedding torrents of blood, by frightful sacrifices, unnatural abstinence from everything that gratifies the animal nature of man, exhausting fasts, cruel penances, abstinence from marriage, and so on. Now similar sacrifices were no doubt made to Yahweh too; but the direction which Moses gave to the religion of his people did not encourage any such practices. He taught them that the best way to honor their god was by leading a moral life. Such a doctrine was capable of producing noble results. Following this path, Israel must grow into such a nation as had not its like on earth.

It is not impossible that Moses was largely indebted to the Egyptians for his high moral conceptions. In many respects the religion of the Israelites was diametrically opposed to that of their oppressors, and their experiences in Goshen certainly tended to increase their aversion to Egyptian ideas rather than to win them over to them. For although one nation often borrows some institution or idea from another in times of peace and when there is a good understanding between the two, yet the gods of an enemy always share in the hatred with which their worshippers are regarded. When Yahweh led Israel out of Egypt, he executed judgment on the gods of the land, and the Israelites knew that their god was at war with the gods of the Nile. But if there is any truth at all in the tradition that Moses was educated amongst the Egyptians and instructed in their wisdom, he certainly could not have borrowed anything better from them than their high estimate of morality. The moral teaching of the Egyptians was already highly developed at the time of the stay of the Israelites in Goshen. Even then, as their writings show, they taught that "a son who obeys his father is rewarded by a long life," and that "obedience or disobedience comes out of the heart of man." They declared that it was a sin to oppress the poor, to live loosely, to cause grief or pain to any one, to murder or steal, to falsify weights and measures, or to torture animals.

To this exalted moral teaching the Egyptians united a great variety of very extraordinary forms of worship. Thus they worshipped various kinds of living animals, such as cats, ibises, crocodiles, and the steer Apis. The number of their images, too, was something extraordinary. We find nothing of this kind in the teaching of Moses, from whose time onward, indeed, there was a party among the Israelites which opposed

all worship of images whatever. The Yahweh of Moses was a genuine Israelitish god; and thus, by grafting the moral teaching of Egypt upon a truly national religion, Moses produced something altogether new.

We know nothing of the forms of worship as modified or introduced by Moses, except that the ark was the most important of all the sacred objects. If only we knew the original meaning of this consecrated symbol, it might throw great light on the early religion of Israel; but unhappily we are almost entirely in the dark about it. It is true that we have a detailed account of an "ark of the covenant," or "ark of the testimony,"[1] but it is part of a description of the tabernacle, which is of no historical value.[2] The zealous reformers, about the time of the captivity, had little regard for the ark.[3] and though the Deuteronomist describes it as a chest containing the stone tables on which the ten commandments were cut,[4] we may be sure that it had really some much less orthodox signification, and that his account is only an attempt to counteract its dangerous tendency, by bringing it into connection with what he considers the true form of Yahweh worship. We shall hear of the ark again from time to time, and shall then see that it was looked upon as nothing less than the dwelling-place of Yahweh. This idea may still be clearly traced in a short account of the Mosaic period,[5] which appears to contain two very ancient forms of blessing, though it calls the ark by the more modern name of "the ark of Yahweh's covenant." It runs as follows: —

The Israelites marched three days from the mount of Yahweh, and the ark of Yahweh's covenant went out before them to seek a resting place for them; and by day the cloud of Yahweh hovered over them as they left the encampment. When the ark went out, Moses said, —

> Rise up, Yahweh! let thine enemies be scattered abroad;
> And let those that hate thee fly!

And when it halted, he prayed, —

> Return, O Yahweh! to the ten thousands,
> To the tribes of Israel!

The word "ark" means simply *chest*. What was to be found in this sacred chest, in or near which Yahweh dwelt, we cannot tell. The importance of the worship of stones

[1] Exodus xxv. 10-22, xl. 20, 21. Numbers iv. 5, 6, 15. [2] See p. 304.
[3] Jeremiah iii. 16. [4] Deuteronomy x. 1-5. [5] Numbers x. 33-36.

among the Israelites[1] certainly favors the suggestion that there was a sacred stone in the ark; and though this is and can be nothing but a guess, it is a fact at any rate that, according to the belief of the time, Yahweh himself went and came to the Israelites with the ark.

Beyond this we know nothing of the forms of worship to which Moses gave the preference; nothing of the usages which he introduced, supported, or combated; nothing of the institutions which he bequeathed to his people; and we must be careful not to form exaggerated ideas on any of these points. No doubt Moses was reverenced in the wilderness chiefly as the representative of Yahweh. His commands obtained a ready hearing, and he made use of his authority, as the ambassador of God, to draw the various tribes closer together — to control their concerted movements — to settle their disputes — to oppose, and, if possible, root out everything that conflicted with the worship of Yahweh — to preach the law of his god on every opportunity — and to impress the ten commandments upon all the sons of Israel, but especially upon their chiefs, when they came to consult him. There must have been families or powerful individuals in various tribes who were so faithfully attached to him and to his ideas as to consult him constantly, to act according to his divine responses, and to strive to establish his authority round about them. In this way they would form a bond of union between the various tribes. We might almost have guessed from the nature of the case where to look for these families, and history confirms our expectations. The Levites, to whom Moses was related, certainly supported him faithfully; and we find them again, at a later period, together with the closely connected Simeonites, showing their zeal for the cause of Yahweh.[2] No doubt the Levites and those who sympathized with them checked the dispersion of the tribes in the time of Moses, and furthered the general good.

If the Israelites would not listen to his exhortations of their own free-will, and he saw a chance of carrying out his measures by force, then doubtless he called his faithful allies together and drew the sword to put down what was evil. We are told that he did so, for instance, when the Israelites fell into sin after having conquered the territory east of Jordan. The story,[3] in its present form, is of very late origin, but the tradition that is at the bottom of it is at any rate perfectly

[1] See pp. 177–179.
[2] See *post*, chapter xviii.
[3] Numbers xxv. 1–15.

faithful to the spirit of the time. The Israelites — so we are told — had formed a close friendship with the Moabites, and had actually begun to take part in their worship of Baal-Peor, which was grossly immoral in its character. Thereupon Yahweh said to Moses: "Take all the leaders of the people and hang them on a cross against the sun, to appease Yahweh. So shall Yahweh's wrath be turned aside." What Moses actually did does not agree with this command, for he ordered the judges of the people to put all the guilty individuals to death, and Phinehas first began to carry out this sentence.

If we had to sum up in a few words the debt which Israel owes to Moses, we should say: He introduced the moral worship of Yahweh among his people. If asked whether his conception of this god was very pure and exalted, we should answer: As far as we know anything about it, it was very imperfect. If the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before the face of Yahweh," is from him, then he recognized the existence of other gods, though denying their right to be worshipped by Israel. Even this is uncertain, however, and it is not impossible that even to Moses Yahweh was nothing more than the special god of Israel. A chest, perhaps containing a stone, was the sacred object to which the presence of Yahweh was attached. Certainly when we compare all this with our own thoughts about God, it appears very unsatisfactory and in the highest degree defective. But the fact that Moses insisted on the moral demands of Yahweh outweighs a host of mistaken beliefs. Surely the worship of a stone or a star, in the name of which reverence to parents and an upright life are enjoined, is more glorious and more rich in promise than the adoration of even an invisible, infinitely exalted, spiritual being, enthroned above the clouds and sky, and reverenced as the creator of heaven and earth, whose chief commandment is to offer sacrifices and observe outward ceremonies. The religious superiority of one form of worship over another depends above all upon the value which it attaches to morality.

Was it a new doctrine that Moses taught? This question may be answered in two ways. Strictly speaking it was not "new" in the sense of "invented by Moses himself." His god had been worshipped by his forefathers before he was born, and had certainly not been unknown to the other sons of Israel. His moral teaching was perhaps borrowed from

the Egyptian priests; the observance of the sabbath he probably found already established amongst certain classes; and the usages which he maintained were already recognized by the most influential families. It cannot be said, therefore, that his work was entirely new. But what founder or reformer of a religion ever has produced anything entirely new? Who can help standing upon the shoulders of the generations that have passed away? Who can help borrowing his ideas from those who have been at work before him? The services of those who have succeeded in any great work consist in ridding old truths of defects which have hitherto clung to them and made them barren; in so grouping these well-known truths as to place them in a clearer and unsuspected light; in saying the right thing at the right moment, and being so filled with the truth to which they cleave as to secure its acceptance by the power of their preaching. Such men give a quickening impulse to the development of those around them, or perhaps of a whole nation.

Such was the work of Moses. In many respects his character was moulded by that of his age, but the direction which he gave to the powers of Israel opens a new era. Moses, the founder of the moral Yahweh-worship, stands at the head of the spiritual movement which culminated in him who said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!"

Chapter X.

THE CONQUEST OF THE DISTRICT EAST OF JORDAN.

Deut. II. 2–III. 22.

WE may now take up once more the thread of the story which our review of the work of Moses has broken. When the Israelites had wandered many years in the district west of Mount Seir, and a new generation had grown up worthy of inheriting the promised land, Yahweh put an end to their wanderings and commanded them to turn northwards. Their way led through the mountain pass between Seir and the Elanite Gulf, where the seaports of Elath and Ezeongeber were afterwards built. The Edomites, along the eastern boundary of whose land they must pass, were already in terror

at their approach; but they were commanded not to molest them; for Yahweh had given Seir as an inheritance to Edom. Far from plundering the inhabitants, they must pay for their necessary food and even for all the water they required; for had not Yahweh blessed his people, and supported them for forty years in the great desert, so that they were in want of nothing?

The Israelites strictly observed this order, and went on to the land of Moab. This country had formerly been inhabited by the giant race of the Emites, but the Moabites had expelled them from it. In the same way the Ammonites, who dwelt further north had driven out the Zamzummites, another race of giants. This was, in fact, the history of all the surrounding districts. The Edomites had taken the place of the Horites and the Caphtorites (or Philistines) that of the Avvites, a Canaanite tribe that had formerly held possession of the land as far as Gaza.[1]

The brook Sared was the boundary of Moab, and the end of the wanderings of the Israelites. Before they crossed this stream the rebellious generation had altogether died out. But the land which Yahweh had destined for their children was not yet reached. They had still to pass through Moab and Ammon, upon whom they were to inflict no injury, for to them, too, Yahweh had given their land.

But when they had crossed the brook Arnon, they came to a country which they were no longer forbidden to conquer. It was the land of Sihon the Amorite, with its capital, Heshbon. "Henceforth," said Yahweh, "will I begin to make all the nations that hear of you tremble and shake before you." Then I sent — says Moses — messengers of peace to Sihon, to ask leave to pass through his land. I told him that the land which Yahweh had given us lay on the other side of the Jordan, and promised that if he would let us pass through his land, as the Edomites and the Moabites had done, we would not turn out of the highway either to the right hand or to the left, and would pay for all the food and drinking water we required. But Sihon refused; for Yahweh had hardened his heart on purpose to give us his land. So Sihon came out with a great army to meet us at Jahaz, but we defeated him, and took possession of his whole kingdom. The inhabitants of its cities, men, women, and children were laid under the ban, and not one of them was left alive; but the cattle and the rest of the booty we kept. From Aroer to the banks of the Arnon, and

[1] See p. 240.

from Ar-Moab even to Gilead, no city was too strong for us. Yahweh gave us everything; but the land of the Ammonites we left uninjured.

Then we went northward to Bashan, where Og was king. He was of the old race of giants, as his iron bedstead shows. It measures nine cubits in length and four in breadth and is still preserved at Rabbath Ammon. When he advanced to Edrei to oppose us, Yahweh bid us be of good courage, and promised that Og should share the fate of Sihon. And it was so. All Bashan fell into our hands. We took sixty great cities with walls and gates and bars, besides numbers of unfortified places. We dealt with the land of Og as we had dealt with that of Sihon. All the human beings we laid under the ban, but took the cattle and other valuables as booty. Thus did we conquer the whole land from the Arnon to Mount Hermon. The Sidonians call this mountain Sirion, and the Amorites call it Shenir.

Then I gave the land from the Aroer to the Arnon, together with half the mountain land of Gilead, to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the land of Bashan to one-half of the tribe of Manasseh, because Jair the Manassite had conquered it; whence it is still called "Jair's villages" (Havoth Jair). Gilead I gave to Machir, another family of the tribe of Manasseh. But the Reubenites and Gadites received their inheritance upon condition that their fighting men should help the other tribes to conquer the land of Canaan, while their women and children, together with their numerous flocks, remained in the cities that were now assigned to them.

When I had arranged all this, continued Moses, I bid Joshua be of good courage, saying to him: "See what Yahweh has done to these kings. So will he do to all the kingdoms against which you march. Fear not, for Yahweh, your god, fights for you."

In the book of Numbers we find a narrative which essentially agrees with the one just given. It tells us[1] that the Israelites sent from Kadesh to ask the Edomites to allow them to pass through their country, but that they refused to do so, and set out with a powerful army to oppose them. Upon this the Israelites changed their plan, and took a circuitous route round Seir. When they came to the Arnon,[2] Moses sent messengers to Sihon to ask leave to pass through his territory. On his refusing to grant this permission the Israelites conquered his land. Here we find it noted that Sihon, king of

[1] Numbers xx. 14–21. [2] Numbers xxi. 13–35.

the Amorites, had taken Heshbon and the surrounding territory from the former king of the Moabites.[1] The conquest of Bashan followed that of the land of Sihon.

The narrative of Deuteronomy is still more highly colored than this other, and the account it gives of Israel's triumphs is embellished most profusely. Within a few weeks, or at the outside months, the whole country east of the Jordan, from the Arnon to Mount Hermon, is conquered; and if the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites are left in the independent possession of their territories, it is simply because Yahweh commands Israel not to attack them. But these peoples were already in great terror. For every nation that heard of Israel — of that people countless as the stars of heaven,[2] to whom Yahweh visibly lent his constant aid — trembled before its power. A people that won such easy victories, and had only to pick and choose the country it would take for its own, ought surely to have been above sending a hypocritical message of peace to Sihon.

But the real course of events was very different. As far as we can recover it, the true history of the conquest of the land east of Jordan is as follows: —

East of the Dead Sea, and further north along the banks of the Jordan, the "sons of Lot" had expelled the original inhabitants and won themselves a home. The Ammonites dwelt furthest to the east, while the Moabites held possession not only of the land south of the Arnon, but even of the territory north of this stream, as far as the Jabbok. But the Amorites who lived west of the Jordan had made an inroad into Gilead, expelled the Moabites from the district between the Arnon and the Jabbok, and made Heshbon their capital. The sons of Lot, under this stress of circumstances, called in the assistance of their near kinsmen the Israelites, who were wandering about over the steppes that stretched from the eastern boundaries of the sons of Lot to the Euphrates. The Israelites were only too glad of an opportunity of exchanging their barren plains for more fruitful regions; and with their help the Amorites in their turn were conquered. Probably the circumstance that about this time Ramses III., of Egypt, made an incursion into Canaan,[3] prevented Sihon's obtaining help from his kinsmen on the west of the Jordan, and in this way contributed to his fall. Thus Israel gained possession of the district which was afterwards called the territory of Reuben and Gad;

[1] Numbers xxi. 26. [2] Deuteronomy i. 10. [3] See p. 308.

and now there was nothing but the Jordan to separate the people of Yahweh from the fertile land of Canaan.

As for the conquest of Bashan, the account that ascribes it to Moses is utterly inconsistent with the date at which it took place. It is probable that even the "sons of Machir" did not take possession of Gilead till after the conquest of Canaan, since the "house of Machir" lived west of the Jordan at first.[1] We cannot fix the exact date of this event, however. On the other hand, it is certain that Jair, the Gileadite, the conqueror of Bashan, after whom thirty places were called Jair's villages, lived in the time of the Judges,[2] and that one part of Bashan was conquered at a still later period by a certain Nobah.[3] Indeed, the very narratives of the Pentateuch itself prove that the conquest of this district of half Manasseh did not take place in the time of Moses; for in fixing the conditions upon which the transjordanic tribes were to be allowed to enter upon the possession of their territory, no mention is made of the Manassites, either in the short account of Deuteronomy or the more elaborate one of Numbers.[4] In both cases it is the Reubenites and Gadites alone who are required to help their brothers.[5]

In reality, of course, the transjordanic district was not assigned in this peaceful way to two of the tribes. The ancient legends represent Reuben as Israel's firstborn son by Leah,[6] while Gad is called the son of Leah's slave girl.[7] No doubt, therefore, Gad was more or less dependent upon Reuben. The two are called collectively "the house of Reuben." It was this house of Reuben that bore the brunt of the desperate struggle against the Amorites, and then, by the right of the strongest and the first upon the field, took possession of the rich pastures between the Jabbok and the Arnon for itself, but was not indisposed to help the other sons of Israel afterwards.

The writer of the first chapters of Deuteronomy could never believe that these ancient events had taken such a course. He thought of the Israelite tribes as acting with perfect unanimity, conquering a fatherland under the command of Moses, and assigning the first portion of the land that fell into their hands to the tribes for whom it was best suited, on condition of their faithfully helping their brothers to com-

1 Joshua xvii. 3 ff. Judges v. 14.
2 Judges x. 3, 4.
3 Numbers xxxii. 41, 42.
4 Numbers xxxii.
5 See Deuteronomy iii. 16–20; Numbers xxxii. 1, 2, 6, 25, 29.
6 Genesis xxix. 32, xlix. 3. Exodus vi. 14. Numbers xxvi. 5.
7 Genesis xxx. 10, 11.

plete the conquest. He imagined the possession of the land east of Jordan to have taken place with the unanimous consent of the tribes, in compliance with law and order, at the command of the divinely appointed leader of the people. He was mistaken in his conception of the facts, but his very mistake bears witness to the progress Israel had made. An Israelite of about the time of the Babylonian captivity could not possibly imagine that the people of Yahweh was once but an ill-defined group of tribes, amongst whom might was right, and over whom even Moses, the delegate of Yahweh, could exercise but small control. It was not so in his time, nor had it been so for centuries. A king ruled in Israel, and men no longer followed their own devices uncontrolled. At a word of command, issued by a single man, the tribes sent their bands of warriors to the battle; the booty was regularly divided amongst the conquerors; the respective rights and duties of the different sections of the people were duly regulated; and no one family or clan could take to itself what was the property of all.

This was a great advance; and if the writer's ideal does not appear to us so glorious as it did to him, it is because we are familiar with a still better state of things, in which society is more adequately regulated, the rights of the various sections of the people more justly defined, a share in the direction of public affairs secured to every one, and all are subject not to the will of a single man, but to laws of the State, made, promulgated, and maintained with due regard to order. In social institutions, as in all else, the light breaks but slowly, and the world takes but one step forward at a time.

Although our writer's false views of the history of the past are themselves the proof that he rejoiced in a clearer perception of justice than was known in earlier times, yet even his ideas are sadly limited in one direction; for he tells us with evident satisfaction how Israel conquered Sihon and Og, slaughtered their subjects, and appropriated their land; and how Edom, Moab, and Ammon escaped the same danger, not because the Israelites had no right to their land — for what right had they to the countries they did take? — but simply because it was the will of Yahweh, Israel's god. Thus, while in regulating the mutual relations of the different sections of the same nation, right was more than might; on the other hand, when affairs were to be settled between different nations, might was still the highest right.

And yet our writer proclaims a principle which must lead

in the end to the recognition of right as the first consideration even in the dealings of nations with each other. It is Yahweh, he says, who gave Moab and Ammon and Edom their land, as well as Israel his. This was not the old belief. At first Yahweh was Israel's god, but had nothing to do with any other nations, except in so far as his own people came into contact with them. Israel, according to the old idea, had received his land from Yahweh, and Moab his from Chemosh.[1] The relations between the gods Yahweh and Chemosh, like those between their peoples, were regulated by the right of the strongest. But gradually Israel rose above these ideas, and reached the conviction that it was Yahweh who not only led the Israelites from Egypt, but also brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir.[2] All peoples, then, are governed by one will, are members of one body, and their mutual relations must be regulated on the same principles as those which govern the affairs of a single people.

We have already seen[3] that this consequence was actually perceived by a few Israelites of a highly developed type. We ourselves live in an age in which it is generally acknowledged, but we have still to wait for the time in which the truth will be fully acted up to. Patience! the human race advances slowly.

Chapter XI.

THE DEATH OF MOSES.

Deut. III. 23–29, XXXIV.; Num. XX. 1–13.

THE time and manner of the death of Moses were as little known to posterity as the place of his grave. Nor is this surprising; for when his people had so far emerged from their barbarous condition as to have a history and to commemorate the particulars of the lives of their great men, Moses was already enveloped in the gray mists of a far-off past. His work still lived, and his name lived with it, but his person was sketched by legend alone. One thing only was known — namely, that it was not Moses but Joshua who

[1] Judges xi. 24. [2] Amos ix. 7. [3] See pp. 154, 155.

led the people into Canaan. Moses, then, must have died before his people entered into the land that had been promised to their fathers. This could not but seem strange to the thoughtful Israelite. Surely he, if any one, ought to have lived to see the prosperity of his people. This raised a question which could not be left unanswered; and six or seven centuries after his death, the writer of the introduction to Deuteronomy answered it in the following words which he puts into the mouth of Moses himself: —

"When I had given the land east of Jordan to Reuben and Gad, I prayed to my god, and said: 'O Lord Yahweh, thou hast shown me the beginning of thy great works and of the revelation of thy power. So glorious are they that no god in heaven or on earth can do the like. Ah, let me now go over with the people and see the good land on the other side of the Jordan, that glorious mountain land and Lebanon!' But I prayed in vain; for Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes. He would not hear my prayer, but answered: 'Enough! speak to me of this no more. Climb the summit of Mount Pisgah, and look well round to every side, for you shall not cross this Jordan. But first appoint Joshua in your place, and speak words of courage to him, for he shall lead the people, and bring them into the land which you may only see from afar.' This was when we were encamped in the valley over against Beth-Peor."

So when Moses had proclaimed the law to his people — we are told at the end of the book of Deuteronomy — he climbed from the plains of Moab to the summit of a mountain peak of Pisgah, which lies over against Jericho, and is called Mount Nebo. From this peak Yahweh showed him all the land. First he turned his eyes northwards, where the rich land of Gilead, with the mountain range that bore its name, was divided by the Jabbok; the nearer half was fertile but comparatively bare of trees, the further was covered with thick forests of oak and pine, broken by the fresh mountain pastures upon which Reuben had set such longing eyes. Then further north, along the seas of Gennesareth and Merom, his gaze fell on a wild and barren land, with steep mountain peaks and inaccessible caves, that favored no life but the brigand's; and at last his eye rested far away on the eternal snow of Hermon, at whose foot was the city of Lais, the future seat of a portion of the tribe of Dan. To the left he beheld the broad table lands of Lebanon, with their far-famed cedar groves, the steep slopes of the mountain land, and the swampy plains, with their

thick growth of rushes. There herds of wild swine and oxen found a home, though the marsh fever made it almost unfit for human dwelling-places. This was the land which afterwards fell to the sons of Naphtali. Between himself and these distant regions Moses beheld the lovely sea of Gennesareth and the far-extending territory of Manasseh and Ephraim, with the ranges of the lesser Hermon, of Carmel, of Gilboa, and the long mountain chain of Ephraim. Then, as he gradually turned to the west, the land of Judah lay stretched before him; in the distance the rich and smiling plain of Sephela, and nearer to him the dry, inhospitable mountain land, with its endless limestone rocks, of which Jebus, afterwards Jerusalem, was the central point. Further to the left lay the deserts, broken here and there by fertile spots, and what was afterwards the southern territory of Judah. Thus his eye reached the steppes of the "sons of Isaac," [1] and then dropped naturally upon the region that lay nearer to him, where the gloomy Dead Sea lay, with its barren shores and that strange promontory on which Zoar was situated. At last his eye rested upon the valley of Jordan and upon Jericho, right opposite Mount Pisgah. He had seen the future heritage of his people.

"This is the land," said Yahweh, "of which I promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, under oath, that I would give it to their posterity. I have shown it to you; but you shall not enter it."

Then Moses, the servant of Yahweh, died there, as Yahweh had said. They [2] buried him in the valley over against Beth-Peor, in the land of Moab; but no one knows his grave to this day. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died. His eye was not dimmed, nor his vigor abated.

For thirty days the Israelites mourned his death, and his place was taken by Joshua the son of Nun. He was full of the spirit of wisdom, which Moses had imparted to him by laying his hands on him. The Israelites obeyed him, therefore, according to the command that Yahweh had given Moses.

Never did another prophet rise in Israel like Moses, to whom Yahweh made himself known face to face. Nor could any other ever do the signs and wonders which Yahweh did through Moses in the land of Egypt and in the desert.

There is a tone of sadness in this story. The words "Speak to me of this no more" sound harsh, and it was but

[1] See pp. 164–166.

[2] After an amended version.

poor comfort for Moses to be allowed to see the promised land, if he might not enter it. In answer to the question why this must be, the writer of Deuteronomy says:[1] Yahweh was angry with Moses because the Israelites had sinned against him. Even Moses must make no exception to the general sentence that condemned the disobedient generation to die in the wilderness.

Such was the view of our writer: and to the majority of his readers it would certainly present no difficulty. The pious Israelites were deeply conscious of the fact that they were all members of one body — the people. They rejoiced with their people, they suffered with their people; nay, their very life was wrapped up in its welfare. A gross violation of the moral law deserved punishment chiefly because it was "foolishness in Israel" and made the land unclean. To be rooted out from the people of Yahweh was the most terrible of all threats. In thinking of the future they were less concerned about their own affairs than about the fate of their people. From such a point of view they found it anything but unnatural or unjust that Yahweh should suffer Moses to die because of the sins of his people.

And yet this did not satisfy every one. At the very time in which the book of Deuteronomy was written, the belief was gaining ground that Yahweh was too righteous to punish any man for another's sin, and that he chastised each one for those sins only of which he had himself been guilty. Thus every misfortune was looked upon as the consequence of some sin committed by him upon whom it fell.[2] Those who held this belief could not rest in the assertion that Moses had not been allowed to enter the promised land because of the sins of the people. They were certain that if, in spite of all his prayers, Moses was forbidden to enter the promised land, he must have brought this punishment upon himself. This conviction was embodied in the following story: —

In the first month — we are not told the year — the Israelites reached the desert of Zin, and pitched their camp at Kadesh, where Miriam died and was buried. But there was not water enough for the people there, and a tumult broke out, in consequence, against Moses and Aaron. "Oh! would that we had died," cried the sufferers, "when our brothers perished before Yahweh's face! Why have you brought the people of Yahweh into this desert, where we and our cattle shall die of thirst? Why did you bring us out of Egypt to

[1] Deuteronomy i. 37, 38; iii. 26. [2] See vol. ii. book iv. chapter x.

take us to this wretched place? There is no harvest to reap here; not a fig-tree, a vine, or a pomegranate to be seen; nay, we have not so much as water to drink." On hearing these complaints, Moses and Aaron went to the door of the tent of conference and threw themselves upon the ground in prayer. And behold! Yahweh's glory appeared to them, and his voice was heard commanding Moses, and saying, "Take your staff, and call the people together. Then do you and Aaron speak to the rock in the sight of all the multitudes, and a stream of water shall gush out from it. Thus you may quench the thirst of man and beast by the water that you cause to flow from the rock."

In obedience to this command, Moses took his wondrous staff from the tent, and when he and Aaron had called the people together in front of the rock, he cried, "Hear, now, you rebels! Can we make water flow from this rock for you?" Overmastered by his indignation, Moses, instead of simply speaking to the rock, raised his arm and struck it twice with his staff. A stream of water gushed from it on the instant, and man and beast were satisfied.

So Israel was rescued once again; but, alas! the two brothers had sinned. Yahweh pronounced their sentence at once. "Inasmuch," he said, "as you did not believe me, and did not honor me before the Israelites, neither shall you be permitted to bring them into the land which I have destined for them."

Now these are the waters of Meribah, that is *strife*, where the Israelites strove with Yahweh in the wilderness of Kadesh, that is *holy*, where he revealed himself to them as the holy one.

According to another writer,[1] Meribah lay not in the desert of Zin, but in that of Sin, which does not lie near Kadesh, on the southern boundary of Canaan, but near Mount Horeb. The sin here [2] laid to the charge of Moses and Aaron, by which they forfeited the privilege of entering the promised land, consisted in their incredulous language; for Moses had said: "Can we make water flow out of the rock for you?" as if it were not perfectly easy for Yahweh to do so! And besides this he had struck the rock twice.

We have now heard two answers to the question: "Why was not Moses allowed to enter Canaan?" both of them given by thoughtful Israelite believers. One said "he suffered the common punishment of all the Israelites;" the other, "he drew the penalty upon himself by his own sin."

[1] Exodus xvii. 7. [2] Compare Numbers xxvii. 12–14.

We cannot be content with either answer, for both are false. Shall we go on, after rejecting these solutions, to attempt one of our own? It would be labor lost. We must confess once for all that we cannot tell how far any single event, which seems painful or even cruel to individual sufferers, is the expression of His will who rules all things for his glory and the establishment of his kingdom. Our "why?" must ever remain without an answer. However much we long for such an answer, however much we torture ourselves by seeking one, all our efforts are simply useless.

And yet we have much to learn from such facts as these. What are the lessons that Moses teaches us from Mount Nebo? He had been called to release his fellow tribesmen, he was the founder of the religion and the national existence of Israel, and he had been faithful in the accomplishment of his task. Yet he saw but little of the fruits of his labor, and another led Israel into the promised land and experienced the joy of gathering in the fruits of his toil. Such is our lot in life. It is often, "one who sows and another who reaps."[1] If we love our work, be our circle wide or narrow, and do that to which God has called us, let us not imagine that we shall reap the fruits of our toil. If our object is a really lofty one we can never see it realized except in a very small measure. In following the call of God, therefore, we must renounce all thoughts of our own glory, and even of the joy and satisfaction which success would bring. We labor not for ourselves, but for the glory of God and the welfare of our neighbor. Though we never enter the promised land ourselves, let us be content with the thought that those for whom we toil will some day inherit it! Such are the lessons which Moses, on the summit of Mount Nebo, teaches us.

Chapter XII.

THE ISRAELITES AT JERICHO.

Josh. I.–VIII. 29.

ON the death of Moses, Joshua became the leader of the people; and as soon as the time of mourning was over, he made the necessary preparations for crossing the Jordan and attacking the Canaanites. He commanded the Israelites

[1] John iv. 37.

to prepare provisions for three days, and reminded the tribes to whom the land east of the Jordan had been assigned, of their promise to help their brethren. Then he sent two spies to Jericho, which was the first city he intended to attack. They reached it in safety, and took up their abode with a certain Rahab, who lived on the city wall. They had not entered unobserved, however, and it was not long before the king sent to Rahab and ordered her to give them up as spies. So now their boldness would have cost them their lives had they not found an unexpected ally in their hostess. She managed to draw the king off the track by assuring him that her guests had already left her, but might perhaps be caught if they were pursued at once. Meanwhile she had hidden them on the flat roof of her house under some freshly gathered flax that was lying there to dry. When the king's warriors had left the house, and were making for the passage of the Jordan at the top of their speed, having closed the city gates behind them, Rahab went up to the house-top and told the spies that she had rescued them because she feared Yahweh. It was well known in Jericho what this mighty god had done — how the Red Sea had become dry at his command, and the lands of Sihon and Og had fallen into the hands of the Israelites. So every one trembled before them, and no one dared withstand them, for Yahweh, Israel's god, was the god of heaven and earth. "Swear," she cried, beseechingly, "swear to me, by him, that you will spare me and my relatives when you take Jericho." The spies took the oath she required, conditionally on her proving faithful to the end; and arranged that when they took the city she was to shelter all her relatives in her own house, and show the besiegers where she lived by the sign of a red cord. Then she let down the two Israelites through the window over the city wall, and they hid for three days among the mountains, and then crossed the Jordan. They reached the camp in safety, and could truly say: "Yahweh has given us the land, for its inhabitants tremble for fear before us."

It was now four days from the Passover. The Jordan was swollen, and here and there had even overflowed its banks. It was impossible to ford it, therefore. But neither was it necessary; for the way in which the Israelites were to cross the river was destined to show once more that the living god, the lord of all the earth, was in their midst. At the time appointed by Yahweh, the priests took up the ark

of the covenant, and hardly had their feet touched the water when the stream stood still some miles above Jericho, and all the water below flowed off into the Dead Sea, leaving the river bed dry along the whole intervening space. So Israel could cross dry-footed, for the waters were held back until the bearers of the ark had left the bed of the river. Then the Jordan streamed on again, and even overflowed its banks. This stupendous miracle confirmed the authority of Joshua in no small degree; and two monuments were raised to commemorate it. Each was built of twelve stones, in accordance with the number of the tribes of Israel. One stood in the middle of the Jordan where the ark had rested, and the other on the site of the first encampment of the Israelites, at Gilgal. The manna-dew ceased as soon as they had crossed the river, and the people ate of the last year's corn and the other produce of the country. All was now ready for the attack on Jericho; and the city was laid under siege. No one was allowed to go in or come out. The brave inhabitants were prepared to offer a desperate resistance; but of what avail were walls and gates, swords and lances, against the will of Yahweh, who had chosen this land for his own peculiar heritage? This thought was deeply impressed on Joshua; for before he attacked the city a being appeared before him, with a drawn sword in his hand, and to the general's challenge: "Friend or foe!" answered that he was the prince of Yahweh's army, that is, the chief of the angels. Full of reverence, Joshua threw himself to the earth, and asked what were his commands; upon which he ordered him to remove his sandals from his feet, for the place was holy.

Yahweh had power to bring the city into the hands of his worshippers, who would consecrate it to him; but it was not to fall by man's device. On six successive days the bands of Israelite warriors marched round the city once each day. First came the vanguard; then seven priests with the sacred trumpets, the sound of which brought the wants of Israel to Yahweh's mind;[1] close behind them came the ark of the covenant, supported by other priests, and then the rear guard. They marched in silence, and nothing was heard save the sound of the trumpets. On the seventh day they marched round the city seven times in the same order as before, and when the trumpets sounded for the last time, at a sign from Joshua a deafening war-cry rose from the army,

[1] Numbers x. 9.

and, behold! Jericho's walls fell down in ruins, and the city was in Israel's power.

A fearful lot was in store for it. It had been laid under the ban, declared holy to Yahweh, and accordingly every living thing within it was slaughtered. Not a single human creature, except Rahab and her relatives, was spared. The precious metals were consecrated to Yahweh, but all else — cattle, houses, furniture, in short, everything — was burned in one frightful sacrifice! Then Joshua cried over the hideous scene of devastation: "Cursed before Yahweh be the man who shall dare to rebuild this city! May he lay its foundations upon his eldest son, and rear its gates on his youngest!"

But one of the Israelites laid a hand on this devoted treasure. A man of Judah, Achan by name, took a rich Babylonian robe, two hundred shekels of silver, and a golden buckle that weighed fifty shekels (a shekel being rather less than a quarter of an ounce troy weight). He could not make up his mind to burn this robe, or to throw the gold and silver into Yahweh's treasury, so he hid them in his tent. Did he think that Yahweh would not see him? Surely that great and holy god would make the entire nation answerable for the crime of this one man. And so he did; for an expedition against Ai (a place near Bethaven, east of Bethel), for which the spies judged a force of three thousand men sufficient, proved unsuccessful. The Israelites were defeated, and Joshua lay before the ark of Yahweh, with the elders of the people, weeping and fasting, till he learned from his god that this defeat was caused by a crime of which Israel had been guilty. Achan was selected by lot from the whole people as the offender; and he himself confessed his guilt. Then Yahweh's wrath must be appeased by a fearful sacrifice. At Joshua's command, Achan and all his belongings, his sons and daughters, his oxen, his sheep, his asses, his tents, and everything he had, were brought into a neighboring valley. Then the general pronounced the words of doom: "How have you troubled us! Now may Yahweh trouble you!" At once he and his were crushed under a shower of stones; fire was cast into the confused heap of tents, furniture, robes, and corpses, and a huge pile of stones, under which the whole lay buried, soon marked the spot where Yahweh's holiness had been vindicated. Thus Yahweh was appeased; and the place is still called the valley of *Achor*, that is, of *troubling*.

Joshua was now certain of Yahweh's help, and prepared

for a fresh attack upon Ai. This time, however, he formed a less contemptuous estimate of his enemy's strength. Having first placed five thousand warriors in ambush behind the city, he determined to entice the enemy outside their walls by a pretended flight, and so give these hidden troops, who were to watch their opportunity, a chance of taking the city and setting it on fire. The stratagem was successful. Joshua fled with his army, but turned round at a certain point and raised his lance on high, upon which the forces concealed on the other side of the city fell upon it, and in a moment it was wrapped in flames! The terrified garrison which had pursued the flying Israelites was slain to the last man. The king alone was taken alive. As Moses at Rephidim had secured the victory to his people by raising his staff on high, so, on this occasion, Joshua lifted up his lance and never let it sink till the battle was fought out, and twelve thousand warriors of Canaan had fallen. Ai shared the fate of Jericho; but this time the Israelites were allowed to keep the booty. All the inhabitants were slaughtered, the city itself burned to the ground, and devoted as an "everlasting hill of devastation." Where the chief gate had stood, a great heap of stones pointed out the spot upon which the corpse of the king had been cast, after hanging on a cross for a whole day.

It needs no elaborate argument to prove that we do not owe these narratives to an eye witness. The book of Joshua, from which they are taken, is of much later date than the events it records, as is obvious from the constant repetition of the statement that such and such a monument exists "to this day," and that Rahab's family dwells amongst the Israelites "to this day." This expression would be quite pointless unless a considerable time had elapsed between the occurrence of the events and the composition of the narrative. A careful examination of the contents of the book soon shows that it consists of two parts, the oldest of which breathes precisely the same spirit as that of Deuteronomy. It is, indeed, a sequel to that book, and describes the fulfilment of the promises there given. The later portion, on the other hand, formed a part of the "Book of Origins," so often mentioned. The former portion, then, was composed shortly before or during the Babylonian captivity, and the latter portion in the succeeding period.

Of course the writers drew their materials from popular

tradition. The great monuments in the bed of the Jordan and on its bank, the enormous heaps of stones in the valley of Achor, near Jericho, and on the spot where Ai had once stood, were all of them associated with some tradition; and the conquest of the land was kept in mind by barren spots covered with the ruins of ancient cities, and regarded with a fearful reverence as devoted to Yahweh. It was well known, too, that Jericho had once been a sacred place of this kind; and many a pious man of the sixth century must have doubted whether it was not against the will of Yahweh that it was ever rebuilt. Nay, it was reported that in Ahab's time, three-and-a-half centuries after the conquest, and three centuries before the composition of the book of Joshua, when a certain citizen of Bethel had rashly ventured to rebuild the city, Yahweh smote two of his sons to punish the sacrilege, though he did not prevent the continuance of the work.[1] Popular traditions, then, especially those of Jericho and its neighborhood, in which the glory of Israel was displayed in the strongest light, doubtless provided the materials for the narratives we have been considering; while the origin assigned to the name of Achor's vale, and the position of Rahab's family (of which we shall speak again), furnished some additional matter.

Our writer has worked up these traditions in accordance with his own ideas. He looks upon history from his special religious point of view, and colors it accordingly. Regarded in this light, his account of the fall of Ai is very curious. To what does he attribute the defeat which the Israelites suffered in their first attempt upon the city? To the sin of Achan, who had taken to himself property already devoted to Yahweh. Why were they afterwards successful? Because, he tells us, they had appeased Yahweh by the execution of the offender. But his own account of the expeditions against Ai makes the course of events appear perfectly natural. The city mustered twelve thousand fighting men; and since the Israelites at first despised their foes, and only sent three thousand men against them, it is not surprising that they were repulsed. On the second occasion they were more cautious. The whole army advanced, a stratagem was attempted, and five thousand men rushed from an ambush upon the deserted city. Surely it needs no special interference of Yahweh to explain such a defeat and such a victory.

The writer evidently attaches great importance to all that

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 34.

concerns Rahab, who concealed the spies. We can easily guess why; for he tells us that "her family exists to this day." This puts the key to his meaning into our hands. No doubt there was some powerful family of Judah in his day that suffered under the reproach of Canaanite origin, and whose members were often taunted with the fact that the blood which flowed in their veins was not pure. Our writer took up the cause of this family, and, while he admitted the fact of their descent, represented their ancestress as a worshipper of Yahweh, although a Canaanite by birth, and as one to whom Israel was under a deep debt of gratitude. Rahab never appears again in the Old Testament, but in one of the genealogies of Jesus she is called the wife of Salma or Salmon, the father of Boaz the ancestor of David.[1] Of course the Evangelist did not invent this himself, and his story therefore proves that a Jewish tradition represented the royal house of Judah as having sprung from Rahab. Perhaps our writer had this house in view when he said that Rahab's family still lived among the Israelites. Another Jewish tradition makes her the wife of Joshua.

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews[2] holds her up as an example of faith while the writer of the epistle of James opposes his view,[3] and says that she was received into the grace of God because of her good works. This contrast between faith and works, however, was unknown to the writer in the book of Joshua. He praised her for rescuing the spies; but she would not have done so had she not been convinced of Yahweh's might. As for us, we do not feel attracted by Rahab when in search of noble examples of faith. In plain truth, she is nothing less than a traitress, who deceives her king and brings destruction upon her city simply for her own advantage and that of her family. Treachery is always contemptible, and it does not speak well for the writer's moral perception that he praises Rahab's deed because it was beneficial to Israel and was done to the glory of Yahweh.

Moreover, the frightful custom of the *Ban* shows us how little trace of a moral character is to be found in the early worship of Yahweh. This usage consisted in devoting kings to Yahweh by destroying them. Jericho, as the first fruits of Israelite conquest, was unconditionally laid under the ban; so was Achan, with all his belongings, as a punishment for his sacrilege; and so, too, with some limitation, was the city of Ai. The sites of these two cities must lie waste for ever.

[1] Matthew i. 5. [2] Hebrews xi. 31. [3] James ii. 25.

Cursed be he that rebuilds them! A human being, if laid under the ban, must be slain; and the death usually inflicted was that of stoning. It is but natural that this fearful demand should have been evaded, and a sum of money or the sacrifice of animals substituted for the person "devoted to Yahweh." But according to the old and strict law this substitution was not permitted [1] After the captivity such redemptions were allowed,[2] and property that lay under the ban was handed to the priests instead of being destroyed.[3] But by that time the original character of Yahweh was more or less obliterated, and such softenings of the old customs were therefore possible. When the wild Israelite warriors broke into Canaan, and showed no pity on the dwellers in the land, reckoning it a crime in them to defend the inheritance of their fathers, then Yahweh was still the cruel fire-god, in whose honor cities were burned and their inhabitants slaughtered, children punished for the sins of their fathers, and all manner of bloody sacrifices offered; and when the Israelite saw the waste patch of land covered with ruins, that reminded him of the unquenchable wrath of his fearful god, the thought of Yahweh's holiness sent a shudder through his frame.

At the conquest of Canaan we are still far from the position of him who spoke of God as "Our father, who is in heaven." Nay! his preaching would not even have been understood by any one in those days. But we must remember that there were still twelve centuries to pass before he came.

Chapter XIII.

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN.

Joshua IX.–XII.

"A LIVING dog is better than a dead lion;" that is to say, "life, though branded with infamy, is preferable to the most honorable of deaths!" So thought the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, or "the Preacher,"[4] and his creed has found many disciples both before and after his time. According to the book of Joshua it was adopted by the inhab-

[1] Leviticus xxvii. 29.
[2] Leviticus xxvii.
[3] Numbers xviii. 14.
[4] Ecclesiastes ix. 4 b.

itants of several Canaanite cities, of which Gibeon was the chief. For we are told that, after the fall of Jericho and Ai, the inhabitants of these other cities were seized with terror and had recourse to a stratagem to save their lives. They sent ambassadors to the camp of Israel, with instructions to represent themselves as coming from a distant land; and in order to give the appearance of truth to their story, they loaded their asses with old, patched-up provision bags and wine skins, put on old sandals and worn-out clothes, and took dry and crumbled bread with them. In this condition they presented themselves at Gilgal, the headquarters of the Israelites, and asked Joshua to conclude an alliance with them. The Israelites were not without their suspicions, and even expressed a doubt whether the strangers were not really Canaanites, but when they declared that they had heard of Yahweh's mighty deeds in Egypt and the district east of Jordan, and pointed to the condition of their provisions and garments as a proof that they had really come from a distance, the Israelites at last allowed themselves to be deceived; and, without previously consulting the oracle, Joshua and the princes made a treaty with them, promising to spare their lives, and confirming the promise with an oath.

It was but three days before they repented of their oath; for they discovered that the ambassadors were Hivites of Gibeon, Chephirah, Beeroth, and Kirjath-jearim. Upon this the people murmured against their leaders and clamored for the destruction of the Canaanites; but Joshua was true to his oath, and accepted the excuse of the Hivites that they had been driven to this act of deception by fear for their lives. Nevertheless, he condemned them and their posterity for ever to be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the altar in "the place that Yahweh should choose."

This desertion of the common cause by the Gibeonites was a great blow to the other Canaanites, for Gibeon was one of the most powerful cities in the land; it was greater than Ai, and its inhabitants were famed for their skill in arms. The news of their submission to Israel, therefore, caused no little dismay, and the remaining princes combined to punish the cities that had deserted the common cause. The king of Jebus (afterwards Jerusalem) called to his aid the kings of Kirjath-arba (Hebron), Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, and they all advanced upon Gibeon together. But Joshua's assistance was called in by the city, and Yahweh encouraged him to go; so he suddenly broke up his camp and fell upon

the five kings. At Gibeon the armies met, and Yahweh himself threw Israel's enemies into confusion. They fled in frantic haste towards Beth-horon; and Yahweh hurled huge hailstones upon them as they fled, so that more of them perished by the storm than by the sword of their pursuers. "Then, on that day, when Yahweh brought the Amorites low before Israel, Joshua spoke to Yahweh and cried in the hearing of his people, 'O sun, stand still in Gibeon! and moon in the vale of Ajalon!' Then the sun stood still and the moon stayed till the people had avenged themselves on their foes." So it is written in the "Book of the Upright." On that day the sun did indeed stand still in the mid-heavens, and did not stoop down towards his setting a whole day long. Never before or since has there been such a day on which Yahweh has listened, in like manner, to the voice of a man; but Yahweh himself was fighting for Israel that day!

At first the five kings escaped from their pursuers, and concealed themselves in a cave near Makkedah; but in the midst of the slaughter they were discovered and a guard set over them. When the pursuit was over, and the remnant of the Canaanites had escaped to their cities, while no one had dared to raise a hand against the Israelites, the doom of the kings was pronounced. They were dragged out of their cave, and, further to humiliate them, five of the Israelite chieftains set their foot upon their necks in token of absolute triumph. Then they were put to death. Their bodies hung for the rest of the day upon five trees, and were then thrown into the cave that had served them as a place of refuge, while a great heap of stones was raised at its mouth to preserve the memory of the event.

Who could stand before Joshua henceforth? Makkedah fell before him, and its inhabitants were massacred. The same lot came upon Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, and many other cities. In a word, the whole of southern Canaan was not only conquered, but laid waste; and the slaughter was so complete that there was not a human creature left alive, even as Yahweh had promised. The whole of this district was conquered in a single campaign, for Yahweh fought for Israel.

And now the time had come for the invasion of northern Canaan. The princes of the north imitated their southern countrymen in uniting their forces to expel the Israelites. At the sea of Merom they assembled in countless hosts, deriving additional strength from the number of their war chariots.

But Joshua fell upon them and scattered them abroad; and then, at Yahweh's command, burned their chariots and hamstrung their horses. Hazor, the headquarters of the confederacy, was the first place that fell before the arms of Joshua, and all its inhabitants were put to death. The same fate overtook the other cities, but those that were situated on hills were not burned down.

Thus Joshua conquered the whole land of Canaan, from south to north, within five years,[1] and defeated one-and-thirty kings.

We need not stay to prove that this narrative gives an exaggerated account of Joshua's victories: for Yahweh's joining in the fight by hurling hailstones, and his making the sun and moon stand still at Joshua's prayer, are features in the story which so far exceed the utmost limits of possibility as unmistakably to betray the presence of legendary embellishments. Thus put on our guard, we find other improbable statements in the narrative. The writer repeats again and again, with evident satisfaction, that the inhabitants of the cities taken by the Israelites were so mercilessly put to the sword that not a single one was left. Such statements cause us horror instead of satisfaction, and for the honor of the Israelites we hope that the massacre they effected was not so frightfully extensive as is here represented. But their severity only makes it all the more surprising that the country should have been conquered within so short a period. For the writer constantly speaks of the valor of the Canaanites, and even says expressly that Yahweh hardened their hearts, in order that they might deserve destruction,[2] which means that they made a brave resistance. It is apparently by an oversight that he declares in one passage that "no one dared to move his tongue against the Israelites."[3] In reality, of course, the Canaanites resisted. They were well armed, and even possessed war chariots; and if the Israelites massacred them whenever they fell into their power, they must have defended themselves with the courage of despair, and maintained the contest to the last man. When we think of all this, it becomes still more surprising that the whole of Canaan should have been conquered by the Israelites so quickly.

Such considerations drive us to the conclusion that the stories of Joshua's fame and success in war are very much exaggerated. But after making every allowance for this, we should still be far from having a true conception of the course

[1] Joshua xiv. 7, 10. [2] Joshua xi. 20. [3] Joshua x. 21.

of events if we had no accounts of his victories but these. Luckily, however, we have others, not only in the book of Joshua itself, but in that of Judges also.[1] The subsequent history of the people, too, throws great light upon this period, and would be simply inexplicable had Joshua really done all that is here ascribed to him. A careful comparison of our various means of learning the truth leads us to the conclusion that if we desire to form a thoroughly false conception of the conquest in every respect, we can hardly do better than accept that of the book of Joshua; for in reality two-and-a-half centuries were required for the gradual accomplishment of what is here said to have been finished within the space of five years. The conquest of the land, and the complete subjection of the Canaanites, were not effected until the time of Solomon.

However strange these assertions may sound, it is easy to prove their truth; and the following are some of the grounds upon which they rest. Amongst the cities Joshua is said to have conquered and laid waste with fire and sword we find Hebron, the well-known city of Judah, together with all its dependencies, one of which was Debir.[2] But elsewhere, in this same book of Joshua, we are told that Caleb and his brother Othniel conquered these places;[3] and the book of Judges confirms this account, adding that the conquest occurred after the death of Joshua.[4] In like manner we hear that the king Jebus, or Jerusalem, fell before Joshua, who took possession of his land;[5] while another account informs us that this city likewise fell into the hands of the Israelites after Joshua's death;[6] but again, in the very same chapter, we are told that the Benjamites have not expelled the Jebusites "to this day;"[7] and it is a well-known fact that David was the first to subdue them and to take possession of their city.[8] Again, the honor of having subdued the princes of north Canaan, who had fixed their headquarters at Hazor, is assigned to Joshua;[9] but we shall soon see that the people of these districts kept the hands of the Israelites full long after Joshua's death. The king of Gezer, too, according to our story, was utterly defeated and his land seized by Joshua;[10] but elsewhere we read that Israel could not expel the Canaanites that dwelt there.[11] The fact is that the Israelites themselves were never able to conquer this city at all, and only gained

[1] Judges i. and ii.
[2] Joshua x. 36–39, xi. 21, xii. 10.
[3] Joshua xv. 13–16.
[4] Judges i. 1, 10–13, 20.
[5] Joshua xii. 1, 10.
[6] Judges i. 1, 8.
[7] *v.* 21.
[8] 2 Samuel v. 6.
[9] Joshua xi.
[10] Joshua x. 33, xii. 12.
[11] Joshua xvi. 10; Judges i. 29.

possession of it when the Egyptian king, whose daughter was married to Solomon, took it and gave it to her as a dowry.[1]

It is easy to explain why the Israelites failed to conquer many districts of Canaan. They were too weak. "Too weak!" it may be said. "How can that be? How could such an army as Joshua commanded be too weak?" In the first place, let us remember that the Israelite tribes were not nearly so numerous as some of the writers would have us believe. They were by no means "as the sand by the sea shore;" nay, they were actually inferior to the Canaanites in numbers.[2] Nor must we suppose that all the sons of Israel were assembled, as the book of Joshua says, in a single camp at Gilgal, where they acted with unanimity and precision. How could they have obtained provisions there?

We must rather think of them as pushing on from time to time, as occasion offered, into the land of the Canaanites, whose power was probably broken by the war with Ramses III., of Egypt.[3] It seems probable that they entered, not only at different times, but from different sides.[4] The main force, which bore the brunt of the conflict, was "the house of Joseph," under Joshua's command; while other tribes either joined this "house" on an inferior footing or followed after it and contended for the spoil. The mountainous districts were the first to yield. There the Canaanites were conquered, expelled, slaughtered, or made tributary. But the invaders found many of the cities too strong for them, and, indeed, they hardly dared to show their faces on the plains, for fear of the war chariots of the Canaanites. Thus the relations between the ancient inhabitants of the country and its conquerors were far from being equally honorable to the latter in all cases, and were very different in the different districts. Here the Israelites had effected a definite conquest, and had rooted out the Canaanites or reduced them to slavery; but there they had made treaties with them to regulate their mutual rights and obligations. In other places, again, they forced their way amongst the Canaanites, but were soon made tributary by them. In some districts the former inhabitants lived upon good terms with the invaders, and the two intermarried till they became a single people. Elsewhere there were little Israelite and Canaanite kingdoms side by side, whose inhabitants lived in armed independence of each other, frequently breaking, by marauding

[1] 1 Kings ix. 16.
[2] See pp. 284, 285.
[3] Compare p. 308.
[4] See next chapter.

expeditions or regular wars, the peace which existed between them.

Amongst the independent Canaanite kingdoms, with which the Israelites had made treaties, was that of the Gibeonites. The story of the device by which they passed themselves off as ambassadors from a distant country, and so saved their lives but became slaves of the temple, appears at first sight credible enough; but when we look at it more closely it seems very improbable. Indeed the Israelites are taken in by this clumsy trick, with their eyes open! For they themselves express their doubt whether these men, who represent themselves as having come from a distance, do not really live somewhere near. Then we are told that Joshua promised to spare their lives — a promise which would be out of place in dealing with a distant people, though natural enough with regard to Canaanites; and yet he only takes this oath on the supposition that they are not Canaanites. They make a treaty together, and yet the Gibeonites are afterwards content to become slaves of the sanctuary. "Of what sanctuary?" we ask. "The place which Yahweh shall choose," is the answer. Now this is the expression, constantly recurring in Deuteronomy, for the temple of Mount Zion, which was, in fact, the first great sanctuary of all Israel at which work could have been found for so many slaves; but Joshua can hardly have assigned the Gibeonites to the service of this temple two-and-a-half centuries before it was built. We shall meet these Canaanites again in the history of Israel; not as slaves, however, but as free men complaining that the oath made to them had been broken. We shall consider hereafter why the writer of the book of Joshua gives such a distorted account of what took place, and must be content at present with calling attention to the fact that Joshua made a treaty with the Hivites of Gibeon and the surrounding places, and that each of the parties to this treaty recognized the other's independence.

How such a false account of the conquest came into existence it is instructive, in many ways, to inquire.

In the first place, exaggeration is inseparable from popular tradition. It knows no middle course, but either praises beyond measure or condemns with the same excess. Its favorites are raised to heaven, and their exploits magnified till they become miraculous; but woe to him who incurs the ill-will of posterity, for his character is painted in ever darker and darker colors! Popular tradition, too, frequently compresses

whole periods together — as a dramatist often does — attributing to a single man what was really the work of a nation, and forgetting all the secondary circumstances in its desire to glorify its hero alone. Thus the Israelite regarded the deliverance from Egypt, and the whole legislation of his people as the work of Moses; he looked upon all the psalms as the work of David, and attributed to Solomon alone the fruits of the collective toil of all the proverb-makers. All that the prophets of North Israel had accomplished was put down to Elijah and Elisha; and, in the same way, posterity gradually forgot less conspicuous heroes of every grade to glorify Joshua the son of Nun as the successor of Moses and the man who had led Israel into Canaan. Each generation, therefore, magnified the importance of his exploits.

But these characteristic tendencies of popular tradition alone could not have given birth to the representations we find in the book of Joshua. In later times people knew well enough how much trouble it had given their forefathers to complete the conquest of the land, and the figures of Caleb and Othniel, of Deborah and Barak, of Jerubbaal and Abimelech, were preserved from forgetfulness to bear witness to the struggles of the tribes even after the death of Joshua. The religious point of view from which the writer looked upon the history of his people contributed largely to the formation of his narrative.

We call the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings historical books; but it is not uninteresting to observe that they were known under quite another title by the Jews who collected the Sacred Writings. They were called the "Former Prophets," and preceded the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve minor prophets, which were known as the "Latter Prophets." They were not regarded as histories so much as works of admonition and consolation. This view of their character was certainly the truest, for it was that of the writers of the books themselves, as well as of their first readers. We must, therefore, never forget to take this religious point of view of the narrators into account, for it always colored their representations very strongly.

The book of Joshua, especially the portion of it we have now considered, is a sequel to Deuteronomy, to which it was probably attached originally. Now the book of Deuteronomy contains a great number of laws which it commands the Israelites to observe, and which it sanctions by glorious promises and terrible threats. The writer saw in his mind's eye an

ideal Israel, faithful in its service of Yahweh, and therefore blessed. Surely, thought he, in those good old days Israel had no pity on the Canaanites, but utterly destroyed them to the glory of Yahweh; or if any of them saved their lives it must have been by some stratagem. What an example for the times in which he wrote! But zeal in rooting out the Canaanites was not the only point he found to praise in the Israelites of Joshua's day; for, according to him, they were faithful to Yahweh's commands in other respects as well.

Let me add a few traits from the portions of his work not yet noticed, that we may have as complete an idea as possible of the picture that was present to his mind.

"When you have entered the land of Canaan," he makes Moses say to the people,[1] "you must write the words of this law upon plastered stones, set them up on Mount Ebal, and build a stone altar by them. Then six tribes shall take their stand on Mount Ebal and six on the opposite Gerizim, whereupon the Levite-priests shall pronounce the curses of Yahweh over those who break his commandments, and the people shall say 'Amen' to every curse." Upon this follows in the book of Deuteronomy, as we now have it, a very long blessing[2] upon the obedient, and a curse,[3] far longer yet, upon the disobedient. If the Israelites obeyed the words of Yahweh, they would obtain the land that their god had promised to the patriarchs, but if they departed from his law they would go into captivity. When these chapters were written, the men of the northern kingdom had long been taken captive to Nineveh, and even those of Judah, in whole or in part, to Babylon. Such a disaster could only be attributed to the sins of the people. Under the influence of this conviction, the writer painted the past in ever fairer colors. Surely, he thought, Israel was obedient in Joshua's days. He saw, in imagination, the people solemnly renewing the covenant at Ebal and Gerizim, in obedience to the command of Moses,[4] and Israel closely attached to the law of the Lord. And this explained to him how Joshua had been able to gain so many victories.

When Joshua had conquered the land, the writer says elsewhere,[5] he summoned the chiefs of the people to Shechem, reminded them of all that Yahweh had done for them, and then solemnly proposed that they should henceforth worship this faithful god; but they must decide for themselves; if they had rather worship the gods that their fathers had

[1] Deuteronomy xxvii. [2] Deuteronomy xxviii. 1–14.
[3] Deuteronomy xxviii. 15–68. [4] Joshua viii. 30–35. [5] Joshua xxiv.

served in Haran, or the gods of the Amorites, that was for them to consider, but as for him and his family they would obey Yahweh. "No!" answered the people, "we will have no other gods, but Yahweh only, for he has been good to us." But Joshua made them think of all that this promise meant, and reminded them that Yahweh was a stern and jealous god, who would not forgive them their sins, but would punish them if they broke his commandments. Still the people persevered in their promise to serve him. "You declare, then, openly," cried Joshua, "that you have chosen Yahweh for your god?" "We do!" they answered. "Then put away," he cried, exhorting them, "the idols which you still possess, and incline your hearts to Yahweh, Israel's god." The people promised to comply. Thus did Joshua conclude the covenant between Yahweh and the people; and when he had written it all in a book, he set up a great stone under the oak by the sanctuary of Yahweh at Shechem. Then he repeated the solemn promise, and said: "This stone be witness! for it has heard all the words of Yahweh. It shall be a witness that you deny not your god." Then the tribes returned to their several places. At last Joshua died at the age of a hundred and ten. Now as long as this faithful servant of Yahweh lived, and all these elders could bear witness to the mighty works of Yahweh, Israel served his god. But then another generation rose[1] that knew neither Yahweh nor his work of deliverance. So they were faithless to Israel's god, and that was the beginning of all the troubles!

The writer of the "Book of Origins," to whom we owe the later portions of Joshua, follows in the same path. He tells us with great detail how Joshua assigned the several tribes their inheritance. First of all he gave the district east of Jordan to Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh, and an accurately defined portion of Canaan to Judah and the two divisions of the tribe of Joseph, Ephraim, and Manasseh. No reason is given for their receiving these in preference to any other districts.[2] Then the Israelites set up the tabernacle[3] at Shiloh, and requested Joshua to measure the land that was still unassigned, in order that he might be able to divide it fairly among the seven tribes who had as yet received no territory. The lot was to decide which portions should fall to the several tribes.[4] Finally the priests had their cities assigned to them.[5] The writer concludes his account of this

[1] Judges ii. 10. [2] Joshua xiv.–xvii. [3] See p. 304.
[4] Joshua xviii. xix. [5] Joshua xxi.

division of the land by assuring us that all the promises of Yahweh were fulfilled, that no one could stand before the Israelites, and that they inherited the whole land and dwelt in it[1] — an assertion which contrasts strangely with accounts of districts which the Israelites saw no possibility of conquering, and complaints of want of room to live in, interspersed in the book of Joshua, as we now have it, in the very midst of these flourishing descriptions.[2]

The writer tells us, further, how faithfully the Israel of Joshua's time observed the commandment of Yahweh, to worship him only in one single place — in those days the tabernacle at Shiloh.[3] For when the warriors of the transjordanic tribes had fulfilled their promise to help their brothers in the conquest of the land, Joshua thanked them and blessed them and allowed them to depart to their own homes. On their way, however, they raised an enormous altar somewhere (we are not told where) on the border-land. Now this was against the regulations of the Law, and the other tribes immediately sent an embassy, under the direction of Phinεas, the son of Eleazer the priest, to expostulate with them. "If," said they, "you think your land unclean because it lies outside Canaan proper, then come over to us, for we have the tabernacle with us, and choose a dwelling-place in our midst; but in any case remember Yahweh's judgments and sin not." But the transjordanic Israelites had a ready answer, for they had not raised the altar with any idea of offering sacrifices upon it, but simply as a monument to serve as a bond of union between them and the brother tribes in Canaan. The deputation returned with this answer, and every one was satisfied with the explanation that had been given. So faithful was Israel in the good old days!

We have seen that whatever differences there were between the two writers of the book of Joshua, they quite agreed in one respect, for they both praised "the good old times" as a period of piety and of consequent prosperity. They did so with a most admirable object — namely, to induce their contemporaries to bid adieu to their sins, to relinquish their perverse religious practices, and to worship Yahweh with all their hearts.

On the whole, too, they doubtless acted in good faith when they painted the far-off past in such bright colors;

[1] Joshua xxi. 43–45. [2] Joshua xv. 63, xvii 12–18.
[3] Joshua xxii.

and yet we can hardly help suspecting that they were more or less aware that their picture was not a faithful one. For instance, when one of them makes Joshua set up a stone under the oak "by the sanctuary of Yahweh, at Shechem," and puts the words into his mouth: "Let this stone be our witness, for it has heard all the words of Yahweh!"[1] We should not have thought he could have helped asking himself whether the old story, from which in this instance he drew the substance of his own, did not teach him that the religion of Israel in Joshua's time was very far indeed from what he desired that of his own contemporaries to be. We should have thought that these writers knew enough of the old stories to see pretty clearly that Israel was neither so devout nor so prosperous in ancient times as they tried to make out it was. We have less hesitation in adopting this supposition because we know that the earlier writer's ideas of honesty were not very scrupulous, since he accepts the excuse of the Gibeonites for deceiving Joshua as quite sufficient.[2] "Surely," he would have said, "a man may tell a lie when his life depends upon it!"

We cannot be accused of want of candor, therefore, if we suppose that this writer purposely represented the past in too favorable a light, in furtherance of the good object upon which he was intent.

And yet, after all, the want of truthfulness may have been unintentional, for people are often inclined to think of a past generation as superior to their own. A deep sense of the imperfections of the present, coupled with a deficient knowledge of the past, and sometimes with small confidence in the future, leads many people into this mistake. Thus we still hear certain persons praise the good old times in which, they say, people were so much better and more religious, and social welfare so much greater; but a closer acquaintance with the past of our own people, and that of others, teaches us very different lessons. Those who exalt our forefathers at the expense of our contemporaries are as far from the mark as the writers of the book of Joshua were when they extolled the Israelites of the thirteenth century before Christ, and held them up as models to their own fellow-citizens.

They did all this with the best intentions, but they did no good by it; for it is so discouraging to be obliged to look upon one's contemporaries as a degenerate race! The truth was much more consoling. The history of Israel — and the

[1] Joshua xxiv. 26, 27. [2] Joshua ix. 24, 25.

same may be said of all other peoples and of the whole race — is not represented by a period of piety, and consequent prosperity followed by a fall, and then a series of unsuccessful efforts to recover from it. The truth is, that the Israelites of Joshua's time were half-civilized barbarians, amongst whom the activity of Moses had scattered some seeds of nobility which would in time bring forth fruit. But at present they gave but little sign of this better future, and were still fierce and rude to the last degree. Their prosperity was that of a horde of nomads who had been tolerably successful in gaining a home by conquest. Some of them were lucky enough to get possession of rich pastures and fertile corn-lands, while others had to be content with more barren districts; some became masters, and others were reduced to slavery; and this not because some were more virtuous than others, but because capricious fortune throws abundance into the lap of one, and withholds it from another.

It is true that, in the end, great things came of these wild invaders; but this was the result of long and painful toil, and its price was paid in tears and blood.

Chapter XIV.

CALEB THE KENIZZITE.

Judges I. 1–21; Num. XIII. and XIV.

AFTER the death of Joshua — we are told in the book of Judges — it was time for the Israelite tribes to take possession of their territory. So they asked Yahweh which of them should begin. The oracle chose Judah, and he made common cause with Simeon. First they fell upon Bezek, the position of which is unknown, and took her king alive, upon which they cut off his thumbs and great toes, so as to disable him for war. He recognized the punishment of God in this mutilation; for in his cruel pride he had himself treated seventy princes in the same manner, and made them crawl under his table to pick up the crumbs that fell from it. He died in Jerusalem, which now fell into the hands of Judah.

Then[1] they turned their arms successfully against the inhabitants of various parts of the future territory of Judah.

[1] Compare Joshua xv. 13–19.

They conquered Kirjath-arba (afterwards Hebron), where the Enakites, Sheshai, Ahiman, and Talmai dwelt. Then they rushed upon Kirjath-sepher, that is "the city of the scribe," afterwards known as Debir. "Whoever takes it shall have my daughter Achsah to wife," cried Caleb; and when his own brother, Othniel the Kenizzite, took the place he kept his word. But Achsah was not content with her future home, and when Caleb brought her to her husband's house, she urged the latter to request a more fertile allotment from her father; and when she found she could not persuade him to do so she undertook the task herself. She allowed herself to slip from her ass in token of distress, and when Caleb asked her what was the matter, she answered: "Grant me a boon! You have given me a dry land, give me some wells with it!" Caleb granted her request, and that is how the Kenizzites came to possess the higher and the lower wells.

The sons of Keni, the father-in-law of Moses, came with the men of Judah from the "city of palms" (Jericho) to the desert of Judah; and when they had taken possession of this desert, the men of Judah and Simeon marched upon Zephath, which they conquered and laid under the ban. They called it Hormah, or "the banned." Judah also took Gaza, Askelon, and Ekron, together with the land in which these cities lay. Thus Yahweh helped Judah to conquer the mountain land; but the inhabitants of the valleys could not be conquered because they had iron chariots. The conquerors gave Hebron to Caleb, as Moses had commanded, and he expelled the three Enakites from it. Of his brother Othniel, we are further told,[1] that when the king of Mesopotamia, Chushan Rishathaim, oppressed Israel, he arose and delivered the people from his tyranny.

We have seen that the book of Joshua represents all the Israelite tribes as united in a single camp, under Joshua, fighting against the Canaanites in concert, and dividing the conquered districts amongst themselves by friendly agreement. The same conception, thoroughly unhistorical as we have shown[2] it to be, underlies the story we have just given; for it represents the men of Judah and Simeon, together with the sons of Keni or the Kenites, as starting on their campaign from Jericho, if not from the common camp. The real course of events was very different; and though we have no direct accounts of it, we can make it out with tolerable

[1] Judges iii. 8–11. [2] See pp. 347, 348.

certainty from various traces it has left in the history of these southern tribes and the relation in which they stood to the inhabitants of the north country. We must begin, then, by reversing the order in which the book of Judges mentions the conquests of the men of Judah, and must make them begin from the south; for it is highly probable that while the house of Joseph, under the command of Joshua, worked its way into Canaan from the other side of the Jordan, and settled in the central district, Judah and his allies entered from the Arabian desert, along the coast of the Dead Sea.

Let us turn our attention for a moment to these allies of Judah. In the first place there was the tribe of Simeon, with which that of Levi was always so closely allied that we shall be safe in supposing that a number of Levite families, if not the whole tribe, were to be found in the camp of Judah. But in addition to these sons of Israel, troops of shepherds of quite another origin ranged themselves under the same flag. We have already[1] pointed out more than once that an Israelite tribe by no means consisted, as some would have us think, of the descendants of a single man, and that Judah, Simeon, and the other sons of Israel were not persons at all, but mere personifications. We have also observed[2] that the Israelites were anything but an unmixed race, and that the sons of Israel did but form the nucleus of the tribes, while all manner of other elements were taken up into them. We are quite unable to discover the real composition of some of the tribes of Israel, but we still know a good deal about that of Judah. This tribe included many families, such as the Calebites, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, and the Jerahmeelites, that were certainly not of Israelite but of Edomite and Midianite origin.[3] This is only natural; for the men of Judah and the other Israelites who had made common cause with them had doubtless spent a considerable time on the southern boundaries of Canaan before they succeeded in gaining a footing in the country itself. These regions west of Mount Seir were inhabited by Edomites and Midianites, some of whom, no doubt, had settled habitations, while others wandered about with their herds in search of pasture. These shepherds, doubtless, cast longing eyes upon the fertile glades of Canaan, and from time to time, as opportunity served, made marauding expeditions against them, though they were not strong enough to expel their inhabitants. In the course of time however, they were

[1] See pp. 102, 103; 226–228. [2] See p. 316.
[3] Compare Numbers x. 29–32.

strengthened by the "sons of Judah," whose habitual attitude of hostility towards the Philistines made them the natural allies of these border tribes. At first, perhaps, the alliance they formed was disturbed by occasional quarrels, but eventually they all made common cause with each other, visited the sanctuary of "the Terror" at Beersheba[1] together, and at last felt strong enough to venture on an attempt to conquer the land of Canaan.

Of course this enterprise was surrounded with difficulties. It will be remembered that a story in the Pentateuch represents the Israelites as having been actually repulsed by the Amorites in an expedition against Zephath.[2] Another account tells us that Moses took this city,[3] while the book of Judges, as we saw just now, says that the Judæans and their allies conquered it after the death of Joshua. Zephath was evidently a border fortress and the key to the land; and it is probable that its fall gave the signal to the shepherd tribes that lived on the southern border of Canaan to seize the opportunity of making a regular invasion. As the first fruits of the spoil, Zephath itself was treated by the Judæans as Jericho was by the sons of Joseph — it was devoted to Yahweh, and the place where it had stood was called Hormah, or "banned." Pushing on from this point of vantage, the invaders came upon a formidable foe to the west; for there the Philistines, a warlike tribe that had come, like the Israelites themselves, from Egypt,[4] held possession of the seaboard. We are informed, indeed, both in the narrative we have just given and in a passage in the book of Joshua,[5] that the Israelites took the Philistine cities Ekron, Ashdod, Gaza, and Askelon; but if this is so, the triumph was but short lived, for we soon find all these places once more in the hands of their former owners. The invaders were more successful towards the north, where they took Kirjath-sepher and the mountain land round Hebron, and extended their conquests up to the district of which the house of Joseph had taken possession.

Thus did Judah and his allies win themselves a home, which they divided according to the rights of war — that is to say, the right of the strongest. Most of the foreign clans ranged themselves under the flag of Judah — whether because the chief of this tribe was the bravest and most successful, or for whatever other reason — and Judah, therefore, became far

[1] See pp. 161–166.
[2] Numbers xiv. 40–45. Deuteronomy i. 41–44; see also p. 306.
[3] Numbers xxi. 1–3. [4] See p. 283. [5] Joshua xv. 45–47.

more powerful than Simeon and Levi, who gradually sank almost into the position of dependencies of the larger tribe. The Simeonites did indeed retain a certain amount of independence, and gained some territory of their own; but many of their families, together with all the Levite clans that had entered Canaan from this side, were scattered amongst the Judæans, while others penetrated as far as Shechem, where we shall meet with them again. Of course the Kenites, Kenizzites, and other kindred tribes acquired land of their own just as the Judæans and other sons of Israel did. What each obtained depended upon his valor or good fortune. Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, the Kenizzite,[1] and Othniel, "the son of Kenaz" (which means that he too was a Kenizzite), are mentioned by tradition as valiant and successful warriors, who drove the warlike Enakites from Hebron and the surrounding district, and took possession of it themselves. The Kenites settled in the desert of Judah, and still further south. From the nature of the case, the boundary between the territory of the Israelites and that of the Edomites must have been very ill-defined, or rather the two must have run into each other, so that in travelling from north to south one would constantly meet fewer Israelites and more Kenites, Kenizzites, and kindred tribes. Hence the legend represented Esau and Jacob as twin brothers, and called them both sons of Isaac.

At the time of the conquest of Canaan the national consciousness of Israel was not yet roused. Centuries were still to pass before the rise of a true Israelite nation. The northern tribes paid no attention to Judah: Judah knew nothing of Joseph, or at least felt no interest in him. But when the sons of Israel began to feel their connection more deeply; when the worship of Yahweh, which was common to them all, took a fresh flight, and the peculiar Israelite character began to be strongly marked, — then the question as to the origin of the inhabitants of the various portions of the land emphatically demanded an answer. The idea took root that none but true Israelites ought to have an inheritance in the land of Yahweh. And yet it was still perfectly well known that the inhabitants of Hebron were not Israelites, but people of another stock. This was strange and even shocking. The legend of Caleb's faith in the might of Yahweh was intended to explain this fact, and to answer the question, "What right have these strangers to an inheritance in the midst of the sons

[1] Numbers xxxii. 12. 1 Chron. iv. 13–15.

of Israel?" The legend, as we now have it, is full of contradictions and repetitions, for it is composed, as we have already hinted,[1] of two different stories. But the old legend may still be recovered completely, and if we omit the later elements we can read it in its original form. It runs as follows[2]: —

When Israel had reached the southern boundary of Canaan, in the desert of Paran, Yahweh commanded Moses to send twelve men to inspect the land. Moses obeyed, and ordered the spies to pass through southern Canaan as far as the mountain land, and to observe everything closely — whether the people were powerful or weak, few or many; whether the cities were fortified or not; whether the soil was rich or dry, well wooded or bare of trees. If possible, too, they were to bring back specimens of its products. It was just the season when grapes are ripe. The spies fulfilled their task, and penetrated as far as Hebron, which was built seven years before Zoan, in Egypt. Here Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the sons of Enak, dwelt. When the spies reached the valley of Eshcol, close to Hebron, they cut a vine-twig, with a single cluster of grapes, which was so large that two of them had to carry it on a pole between them. They also gathered some samples of pomegranates and figs. It was from the cluster of grapes that they cut there that the valley took its name of Eshcol, that is, "cluster." Thus laden they returned to Moses, in the desert of Paran, and showed him the fruit, exclaiming at the same time: "The land that we have been in is a glorious land, flowing with milk and honey, and see what fruit it bears. But the inhabitants are mighty, the cities are appallingly strong, and we have actually seen descendants of the Enakites there." This was true enough; for at that time the Amalekites lived in the south, the Hittites, Jebuzites, and Amorites in the mountain land, and the Canaanites on the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan. Now Caleb, who was one of the spies, did not dispute the truth of what his companions said, but when he saw that their report had instantly set the people murmuring, he tried to restore their courage. "Let us attack them," he cried. "We shall conquer the land, for we are powerful enough for the task." But the others still declared: "We are far too weak!" On hearing this the Israelites burst into tears, upon which Yahweh said to Moses: "How long will this people vex me by its want of faith, in spite of all the miracles I have done? I will

[1] See p. 307.

[2] Numbers xiii. 1, 2, 3, 17-20, 22-24, 26 (partly), 27-31, xiv. 1, 11-25a, 39-45.

destroy them by a plague, and will make a far mightier nation of your posterity!" But Moses said: "Lord! thou hast made the Egyptians feel that thou hast redeemed this people with might, and they have spoken of it to the dwellers in this land. They have heard that thou, Yahweh, dost abide in the midst of these tribes, and art seen face to face; that thy cloud stands over them, and thou showest them their way by a column of smoke and fire. If, then, thou bringest them all to nought as a single man, it will be said that thou hast slain them in the wilderness because thou couldst not bring them into the land thou didst promise them. Let thy might be revealed, and forgive this people, according to the greatness of thy mercy, as thou hast done from Egypt until now." Then Yahweh answered: "I will forgive them at your prayer. But as surely as I live and as my glory shall fill the whole land, not one of those who have witnessed all that I have done in Egypt and in the desert shall see the land that I promised to their fathers. For now they have tried my patience ten times by refusing to hear me. But my servant Caleb is of another spirit; he has fulfilled his duty towards me. I will bring him to the place he has visited, and it shall be the possession of his posterity." At that time the Amalekites and the Canaanites were still in the valley. Then Moses told all these words to the people. They were terrified and repentant, and, even though Moses forbade it, they were now determined to attack Zephath. But they were repulsed.

In this, as in most other Israelite legends, there is more than one object in view. Its main purpose is to answer the question, why Israel wandered about so long in the desert.[1] Incidentally the name of a valley near Hebron is explained. This name, Eshcol, is derived by another legend[2] from one of the early magnates of the neighborhood of Hebron; but here we are told that the valley derived its name from the "cluster" that the spies took from it. In addition to all this, however, the person of Caleb plays an important part in the story, and an explanation is offered of the fact that this Kenizzite had gained an inheritance amongst the Israelites. We find the same representation of the case elsewhere.[3]

Although, as we have seen, this is not the true explanation of the fact, yet it speaks well for the writer's spiritual perception. He could not deny that, extraordinary as it might appear, a stranger had actually obtained a share in the prom-

[1] See pp. 307, 308. [2] Genesis xiv. 24. [3] Joshua xiv. 6–15.

ises which Yahweh had given to Israel; so he found the solution of the mystery in the supposition that this stranger had earned the privilege by his faith, by his fidelity and perseverance in the service of Yahweh. This shows true spiritual perception.

If only Israel had remained faithful to this principle, that a heathen might be raised by piety to the level of the Israelite! But it was not so. To most of the Jews after the captivity this solution of the difficulty was by no means satisfactory. Caleb's faith, however great, would have availed him but little in the eyes of some of them; for their chief pride was in their descent and in the purity of their blood. If Caleb was not of the true "seed of Abraham," he was no child of the promise. Away with him then! The men who passed this judgment supposed it to be sanctioned by the practice of their forefathers. They could not imagine it otherwise. If Caleb, then, according to the old accounts, had received an inheritance in Israel, they argued that he must of necessity have been a descendant of Judah. Before long, accordingly, the following genealogy came into the world. Judah had a son Pharez, and he a son Hezron; Caleb and Jerahmeel were sons of this Hezron, and Caleb in his turn had several sons, amongst whom was Hebron (Caleb's dwelling-place). A number of Judæan families were also included among Caleb's descendants.[1] The spirit that inspired these genealogies is that of intolerance. There is but one people, it says, that stands in the grace of God and is good in his sight. That people is Israel. Whosoever does not belong to it is a heathen. But suppose he is full of devotion and love? That has nothing to do with it. He is a mere heathen. But suppose he loves the people of God and does them good? It is all the same. He has no share in God's favor.

So completely was Israel's religion petrified! Such was the dream of spiritual pride from which that teacher strove to rouse it who placed the merciful Samaritan above the pitiless Jew, even though the latter was a priest.

[1] 1 Chronicles ii. 3–5, 18, 25, 42–55.

Chapter XV.

DEBORAH AND BARAK.

Judges IV. and V.

HAVING spoken in the last chapter of the conquest of southern Canaan, we shall now turn to the north again, and shall see how hard it was for the Israelites to maintain themselves there. But first we must say a word or two about the book from which we derive almost all our knowledge of this period. It is the book of Judges.

This work embraces a number of old and trustworthy traditions about the centuries between the conquest of Canaan and the time of Samuel, the last of the Judges. The writer has drawn most of his narratives from trustworthy sources, and in following him, therefore, we are, as a rule, treading upon firm ground. Our gratitude to him would indeed be still greater than it is, if he had given us all that he found in his authorities unmixed and unaltered. But to an Israelite historian this seems to have been a simple impossibility. The book of Judges, like those of Joshua, Samuel, and Kings, is a prophetic work,[1] and the author makes history subservient to his object of admonishing the people. This tendency, of course, influenced his representations of the past.

In the first place he knows but one cause of disaster to a people — faithlessness to Yahweh; and but one way to prosperity and power — obedience to Yahweh. He tells his contemporaries, therefore, that Israel suffered much, in ancient times, because it was faithless to its god. The Israelites had not rooted out the Canaanites, and they worshipped idols. So Yahweh punished them by selling them to all their foes. But when Israel repented of its sins, Yahweh raised up a deliverer, and as long as he lived and ruled all was well. When he was dead, however, the people fell into sin again, and the same series of events recurred. The writer himself tells us, in a sort of introduction which follows a short narrative of the conquest and precedes the account of the exploits of his heroes, that this is the point of view from which he looks upon the history of the period.[2] But this

[1] See p. 350.

[2] Judges ii. 6–iii. 6.

view of the connection between piety and prosperity and between faithlessness to Yahweh and adversity is not true. We shall even see that the great fidelity of Israel to Yahweh's commands was one of the very causes which now and then seriously endangered its independence during the period of the Judges and at other times. Such a mistaken idea could not but influence the writer's conceptions of the past. Suppose, for instance, that one of the deliverers of the people had been a worshipper of Baal; the writer of the book of Judges would certainly have been unable to believe anything of the kind, and would have represented the hero as a faithful worshipper of Yahweh; for had it been otherwise, he would have thought, how could he have received power from Yahweh to deliver Israel? We shall see presently that this example is not merely imaginary.

Again, neither the writer of this book nor any other Israelite historian possessed in any high degree the power of placing himself in imagination under different conditions of national life from those with which his own experience had made him familiar. Our writer knew, for instance, that the Israelites had no kings during the first centuries after the conquest of Canaan; but he had not the slightest conception of the terrible confusion consequent upon this state of things. He imagined Israel to have been quite a compact nation, governed by judges, and waging war or living at peace as a single whole. This conception is utterly untrue. The connection between the different tribes at this period was for the most part as loose as possible. Each one looked after itself, and it often happened that the misfortunes of one gave no concern to another. As a rule, the so-called judges were as far removed as possible from regular magistrates, by the years of whose government the course of the national history could be measured. Only a few of them ever bore the name of prince or ruled over even one or two of the tribes. For the most part they were heroes who rose up to deliver some oppressed district, and afterwards returned to the plough or the crook, with which they had earned their bread before. If they had other gifts, as well as valor, then no doubt for a longer or shorter period their advice was asked by their neighbors in cases of difficulty, and their word carried weight in the assemblies of the inhabitants of the district in which they lived; but their influence was wholly moral, that is to say, it depended entirely upon personal qualities, such as bodily strength, courage, penetration, or

justice. A later generation, accustomed to regular magistrates, and taking for granted that there must have been such in the times of their ancestors also, called these heroes "Judges;" but they bore no such title during their lives. Before the establishment of the monarchy, in that period of restless violence and war, numberless heroes must have risen among the Israelites; but while the majority of them were forgotten some few survived in the memory of the people. Of some little but the name has been preserved, while the exploits of others have been more or less fully recorded.

Since our writer thought of the judges as regular magistrates whose power was recognized by the whole people, and imagined that their regular succession was interrupted only by intervals during which their help was unnecessary, because Israel was at peace, it is but natural that he should have endeavored to fix the length of their respective rules. His principle was to assign such periods to them that, together with Moses, Joshua, and the first kings, they would just fill up the time between the Exodus from Egypt and the building of Solomon's temple, — a period which a passage in the book of Kings, from the hand of the same writer, fixes at four hundred and eighty years.[1] In reality the period of the judges was much shorter. Little more than two centuries elapsed between the conquest of Canaan and the time of Solomon. We may therefore neglect, without misgiving, all the notices which our writer gives us of the time during which this or that judge governed the land, for they all belong to his own artificial system of chronology.

The series of his judges begins, immediately after Joshua's death, with Othniel. We are told, in a single word, that this hero overcame a Mesopotamian king, and that the people afterwards had rest for forty years.[2] Then we are informed that the Moabite king Eglon, with the help of the Ammonites and Amalekites, took Jericho — that is to say, no doubt, established his headquarters on the spot where Jericho had formerly stood — and oppressed Israel for eighteen years, till Ehud, a Benjamite, treacherously murdered him and took advantage of the confusion that followed to call the Israelites to arms and so restore his country's liberty. After this the people had rest for eighty years.[3] A certain Shamgar, who slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad,[4] is mentioned

[1] 1 Kings vi. 1; compare p. 247.
[2] Judges iii. 7–11.
[3] Judges iii 12–30.
[4] Judges iii. 31.

next. Then follows the first detailed account of a judge — an account which we know to rest upon firm historical grounds, because most of the particulars are confirmed by the song of Deborah, the most ancient Israelite poem of any extant which we possess. I should like to give this song at length, but there are so many unintelligible passages in it that I must be content with borrowing a number of details from it in describing what took place, and with finally quoting a portion of it.

Between the range of Carmel to the west, and the lesser Hermon and Gilboa to the east, lies the plain of Jezreel, about one-and-twenty miles in length, and thirteen in width. It is eminently suited, from its nature, to serve as a battle field; and the stream of Kishon, which receives part of its waters from Gilboa and part from Tabor, runs through it in a north-westerly direction. Long after the conquest the regions north of this great plain remained to a large extent in the possession of the old inhabitants. West of Lake Merom lay the city of Hazor, the abode of the Canaanite king Jabin. We are not told whether this monarch had suffered a defeat when first the sons of Israel penetrated into his land; but it deserves notice that the father of the tribe of Naphtali, which inhabited this district, is called in the Israelite legend a son of Jacob by Rachel's slave-girl.[1] This shows that his blood was not considered noble. Zebulun, too, which dwelt further south, and certainly experienced the tyranny of Jabin, is called the youngest son of Leah, which means that the tribe did not rise to importance till a comparatively late period. And the so-called "blessing of Jacob"[2] sings of Issachar, who dwelt still further south, as follows[3]: —

> Issachar is the beast of strangers,
> Lying down within the enclosure;
> When he saw that rest was good,
> And that the land was fair,
> He bowed his shoulder to carry burdens,
> And became a tributary.

All this seems to indicate that a few bands of Israelites had penetrated as far north as lake Merom, or perhaps even farther, and had taken special possession of the coast land where the Asherites and some divisions of Zebulun[4] found a home; but that only a few families had settled in the western part

[1] Genesis xxx. 7, 8.
[2] See p. 226
[3] Genesis xlix. 14, 15, after an amended version.
[4] Genesis xlix. 13.

of north Palestine, in the marshy districts near the lakes of Merom and Gennesareth, whereas the fertile and beautiful country between Gennesareth and Carmel had indeed fallen to the lot of certain clans of Zebulun and Issachar, but only at the price of their freedom, since they became tributary to the Canaanites.

The plain of Jezreel, then, formed a kind of boundary between the country over which the Canaanites still held sway and that of which the Israelites had become the masters. On the plain itself certain wandering tribes of shepherds pitched their tents. They were Kenites, and had perhaps penetrated to their present position from the south. But though they had gained an entrance into Canaan by the aid of the Judæans and other Israelites, they were not on good terms with the kinsmen of their former allies, but took the side of the Canaanites.

No wonder! For Jabin's power was terrible. Not far from the plain of Jezreel his commander, Sisera, had established a camp in which there were nine hundred war-chariots ready for action. The name of the place, Harosheth (perhaps "camp"), of the heathen may be derived from this circumstance. We cannot be sure of the form of these chariots. They may have been provided with scythes and spikes to plough down the enemies' infantry, for we know that some peoples of antiquity employed chariots of this description; but it seems more probable that they simply served to bear the warriors with their charioteers to battle, and to furnish them with a vantage ground from which to hurl their spears and shoot their arrows. In any case they were regarded with great terror by the Israelites, who hardly dared to show their faces in the valleys, where these "iron chariots" were, of course, more formidable than in the hill-land. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Kenites, who lived in the plain of Jezreel, submitted to the owners of these dreaded engines of war; but the fact that they did so still further reduced the chances of the Israelite tribes north of the plain of ever tearing themselves out of the iron grasp of the Canaanites.

The great highway from Syria to Egypt ran through the plain of Jezreel, and whoever held possession of it was, therefore, master of all the commerce of the country, had the whole sea-board more or less in his power, and could lay imposts upon all kinds of merchandise. Jabin made ample use of these powers. The result was that commerce was brought almost to a standstill, and it was not long before the

consequences made themselves felt even south of the plain. The roads were deserted, and everything languished. The Canaanites grew more insolent every day. Their troops kept penetrating further and further south. Not one of the great highways was safe. Travellers were compelled to find their way by hunters' and shepherds' paths. Dread of the Canaanites rose higher and higher. The flocks were plundered, and the Israelite husbandman never knew whether he would be allowed to carry home the harvest that he saw ripening on his land. But woe to him if he resisted the tyrants! He was a child of death. Young men and girls were carried off as slaves. No one dared to resist the plunderers. And still they kept advancing. Who should deliver their victims? In the south, Shamgar, who fought against the Philistines, was still living, and a certain Jael,[1] of whom we know nothing more, enjoyed great fame. But perhaps they felt no concern for "the sons of Issachar and of Joseph." Or did their courage fail because old age had robbed them of their strength? Or did they not know what cry would wake an echo in the hearts of their brethren? Be this as it may, they did not deliver the people. Where must they look for help? The Asherites were powerful indeed, but like the sons of Dan they were too busy with their ship-building, their fisheries, and their commerce to give heed to the sighs of the down-trodden.[2] Often did the victims gaze across the Jordan wistfully, for there too their brethren dwelt. Had they not heard over there of their distress? They had, indeed; and when the bold shepherds of Reuben sat together in the evening on the banks of their streams they often spoke of the weary days passed by their brothers on the other side of the Jordan. Then they would tell of the fearful power of the Canaanites, of Sisera's strength, of those dreaded chariots, or of the cruelties practised on men, women, and children, while a curse of muttered wrath or a cry of indignation broke from the hearers. Then they began to think what could be done. They could not leave their brethren to their fate. Shame on them if they did! And yet how could they help them? All hands were needed for the work at home, all weapons to ward off beasts of prey and robber bands. Well! they would consult the men of Gilead. They would — do a hundred things; but they *did* nothing. And often enough they forgot the sufferings of their neighbors as they lay stretched at ease upon the grass listening to the bleating of their flocks. It was very sad that

[1] Judges v. 6. [2] Judges v. 17.

their brothers should be so cruelly oppressed; but, then, what could they do?[1]

The suffering grew more and more intense. It could not last. The names of Naphtali, Zebulun, and Issachar were in danger of utterly perishing. Help yourselves then! Stand up and fight for liberty! There were heroes enough among the oppressed tribes; but who was to place himself at their head? Who was to inspire them with courage, and, girding himself to the fight, conquer or die at their head?

In the north-eastern corner of the plain of Jezreel the stately Tabor raises its broad crown. Close by this mountain, or perhaps on its summit, was situated in those days the little city of Kedesh. It is called Kedesh of Naphtali in one passage of the narrative;[2] but it cannot possibly have been situated so far off, by lake Merom. It must be looked for near Mount Tabor. In this Kedesh dwelt Barak, the son of Abinoam. Many an anxious eye was turned towards him. Why did not he urge on the fight? Dared he not? No! he dared not. Brave as he was, he shrank from such a task. Those war-chariots of Sisera! Those dreaded chariots!

And still the burden grew heavier to bear. Lamentations rose from the worshippers at every feast of the new moon, or whenever else the gods were invoked and sacrificial meals were held. Then, amidst the sobs of the people, the priest would pour out water upon the ground and would sigh, "We are like water that is spilled and can never be gathered up again![3] O Yahweh! help us!"

Help was to come from the south. In the mountain land of Ephraim, between Rama and Bethel, stood a palm tree long known as Deborah's palm. Near this tree lived a certain Lapidoth, whose wife was celebrated far and near as a holy woman, who received revelations from the deity, and whose word was accepted as a divine response. Many a one came to consult her or to call in her aid, for she was the refuge of all the oppressed. And the pilgrims would often assemble, on a holy day, at the stone of Bethel or some other sacred spot near Deborah's palm, while she held judgment amongst them. Woe to the man who had removed the boundary marks or had driven his cattle into his neighbor's corn-field! Woe to the craven who had accepted a fine instead of slaying his kinsman's murderer! Woe to the libertine who had laid hands on his neighbor's wife! The

[1] Judges v. 15 b–17 a. [2] Judges iv. 6.
[3] Compare 1 Samuel vii. 6; Psalm xxii. 14.

holy woman turned her flashing eye upon him and it pierced his inmost soul. Unable, in his conscious guilt, to bear her awful glance, he was driven to confess his sin, though he knew full well that to do so was to issue his own death-warrant. Yes, she was indeed a holy woman, for she could read the souls of men and interpret the language of God in Nature.

In those days Deborah was a frequent witness of the depression of her neighbors; for the Israelites who came from the north could speak of nothing but the tyranny of the Canaanites, and the woes of the sons of Israel, or of Barak and the other heroes staying at home and doing nothing. Then Deborah's blood would boil and her eyes flash, and a word of God would seem to hang upon her lips; but it died away, and she was silent. Had *she* any power to help them? No! deliverance was of Yahweh. He was the rock of Israel. And still he seemed deaf to his people's prayer. How often had she watched the flight of the birds and listened to their cry! But the omens were never favorable. There was nothing to show that Yahweh would come to help his people, or was mighty enough to withstand the gods of the Canaanites. And she would often bow down in prayer, or spend the whole night on the summit of a lonely hill or beneath the sacred trees, sighing, "How long? Yahweh! How long?"

One evening she was waiting to hear the voice of her god once more. The morrow was a holy day. They would come to her again from all regions, from the down-trodden districts of the north, and ask her for a word of God. What answer was she to give them? Had she none but the old one, "Wait!" How long must she mock them with it? Her eyes are fixed upon the furthest south. What is this she feels? A stream of warm air is wafted against her face. See! the thunder-clouds are gathering over Seir! Hark! The voice of Yahweh bursts upon her ear! The earth trembles. The mountains shudder. 'Tis time! He comes![1]

The morning breaks. In deep depression, as heretofore, the sons of Benjamin and Ephraim gather round the palm. Where is Deborah? There she comes! But how changed her glance! What triumph in her step! "The spirit of God is upon her!" they whispered in awe. And they said well. "Praised be Yahweh," she cries; "deliverance is at hand. He comes. He has whetted his sword and grasped his shield, and his spear trembles in his hand! Fear not the might of the Canaanite, for as a lion roars over his prey

[1] Judges v. 4.

when a flock of sheep approach him, so does Yahweh roar. The beast of prey shudders not at the sound of their bleating, though they be many, nor trembles at their numbers, for they are helpless.[1] So Yahweh fears not the war-cry of Sisera's warriors." Then a great shout of "Who is our leader?' rises on every side. "Barak!" she replies. "Where is he?" Deborah's eye soon rests on him as she cries: "Yahweh commands you to gather the heroes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Tabor. He himself will bring Sisera and his army to the valley of Kishon to meet you. There shall the slaughter take place. He has given the foe, with all his chariots, into your hand. Then the hyenas shall hold feast and the vultures shall feed fat! To arms!" "To arms!" the cry re-echoes through the air. "The sword and the spear of Yahweh! For Yahweh and for Barak!" But Barak pauses still. "O Deborah! Inspired of God!" he replies to her appeal. "I am ready. But what can we do without your help? Come thou with us, and the victory is ours!" "Yes!" cry the people; "Yes! Deborah with us! Glory to Yahweh!" And Deborah is ready.

The news of what has happened spreads like fire through the land. Night after night the beacons glow on the hill-tops in sign of war. The notes of the rams-horn trumpets ring through the air; and hill and valley echo to the cry: "For Yahweh, and Barak, and Deborah!" The men of Naphtali and Zebulun have assembled at Mount Tabor, and the warriors of Issachar have joined them. Sisera calls out his troops in haste to crush the insurrection, and rumors of his strength are brought to Tabor. How can they hope to resist him? The sons of Israel are brave even to desperation, but are they not as good as defenceless? Not one, except perhaps Barak and a few more, possessed a lance or a shield. Stone choppers, wooden clubs, and arrows pointed with flint or bone — such are the weapons with which they must fight, baring their naked bosoms meanwhile to the iron weapons of their foes. But what of that? "Yahweh is with us! Glory to him, for thousands are assembling of their own free will!" "Who are these at the head of the troops?" "Elders and nobles riding on she-asses! They, too, are risking their lives in the holy war!" "Who are those coming from the south?" "Glory to Yahweh! The heroes of Issachar!" "And those behind them?" "The sons of Ephraim, from Mount Amalek." "And those?" "The bold slingers of

[1] Compare Isaiah xxxi. 4.

Benjamin! Do you see them? The sinews of their right hands are broken in childhood — all their strength is in the left, but never does the stone from a Benjamite sling fail to find the mark."[1] "Glory to Yahweh! for the people come to battle." "For Barak and Deborah!"

The battle soon began in the southern portion of the plain, near Megiddo and Taanach.[2] The Canaanites had the advantage of the ground, for the Israelites could fight better among the mountains than on the plain, where the war chariots of their enemies had free scope. Think of those ill-armed bands ranged against hundreds of chariots yoked to fiery horses, and bearing warriors cased in mail, closely followed by the infantry. But if only they could keep cool, and aim the missiles at the horses, — or, at a signal from their leader, all raise a piercing yell or a deafening shout of battle, sounding the horns at the same moment, and so scare the horses, — the ranks of the foe might be broken, and the chariots set dashing against each other, and perhaps trampling down the infantry of their own side. These chariots, in fact, were not so formidable as they appeared, and were very apt to convert a slight reverse into a great defeat. So it was on this occasion. "Yahweh threw the army of Sisera and his chariots into confusion before the face of Barak," says the historian.[3] A panic seized the Canaanites. The terrified horses dashed together, trampling the warriors and overturning the chariots. They rushed in wild and hurried flight towards the Kishon; but the river was swollen high, and so fought on Israel's side. Many of the fugitives lost their lives in its waters. The pursuit was hot. Some of the Canaanites fled to Meroz. What? to a city inhabited by Israelites? Yes! And they were received as guests, while the city gates were closed against the conquerors who followed hard upon them, and all help refused. "A curse," cried the indignant Deborah, when all was over, "a curse on Meroz! A curse on her inhabitants, for they would not come to the help of Yahweh!" And probably the city paid by utter devastation for its want of faith in Yahweh's victory and of fidelity to Israel.

Meanwhile Barak had fixed his thoughts upon the hostile general, whose arms he longed to display as trophies. Sisera had a long start of him, for he rode in a chariot; but after a time it broke down and he had to pursue his way on foot. It

[1] Judges xx. 16. [2] Judges v. 19.
[3] Judges iv. 15.

was a race for life. Behind him the victorious Israelites; before him, O joyful sight! the tents of his allies, the Kenites. Thither he directs his steps. He can go no further. The darkness is coming on. He need not fear recognition, and may hide himself among his friends. A little rest at least before he goes on! He sought the tent of Heber, the Kenite chief. Jael, the wife of Heber, stood at the entrance of her dwelling, recognized him, hastened to meet him, and asked him to rest there. He crept into her abode — surely he was safe in the tent of the women! — and fell down exhausted. She threw a cloak over him. "A draught of water!" he gasped. In a moment she brought him the best bowl she had full of delicious milk. Sisera felt absolutely safe. This woman would not betray him. She would still be faithful to him, defeated as he was. "Go and stand at the entrance," he muttered, as he dropped into the sleep of weariness, "and if they come, tell them there is no one here."

His eyes are closed. See what a sudden change has passed over Jael's face! There lies the foe of Israel asleep. Her husband has made peace with him — but in fear, not love. As for her, she hates this man. Has he not oppressed, tortured, enslaved, and slain the children of her people? Her people? But, surely, she is not an Israelite? By birth she is not, but in spirit she is. She is deeply attached to these tribes with which her own has wandered for now at least a century, and with whom it entered this noble land of Canaan. It is true that they, the Kenites, have never made up their minds to imitate their allies, settle in towns and villages, and cultivate the soil. They are still free shepherds. But this difference has not quenched their sense of brotherhood. She herself is a worshipper of Yahweh, Israel's god, who is now chastising his foes for their insolence. He has gained the victory, as she had fervently hoped, and indeed expected that he would. And now . . . there lies Sisera, the enemy of Yahweh, and therefore her enemy. Should she not hate him whom her god hated? She must not betray him, he had said. Betray him! No. Woman as she is, she can do more than that. He sleeps — he shall not wake! Where can she find a weapon? She sees none that she can trust to deal a death-blow. But stay! A thought has struck her. In a moment she has pulled out one of the sharp wooden pegs which holds the cords of the tent to the ground; she has grasped the mallet with which they are driven in. She draws near him. Is he asleep? Yes, sound asleep. . . .

And e'er long Sisera lies dead, with the tent-peg driven through his temples. She has struck the great blow! Praised be Yahweh! There comes Barak! Ha! he is swift of foot and stormy in pursuit; but he will soon see that he has come too late. Jael goes out in triumph to meet him. She leads him into her tent. "There lies the man you seek!"

Thus was the battle won, and Jabin's power broken; and as the wearied warriors gathered round the watch fires, loud cries of triumph rang through the air. "Long life to Barak!" "Long life to Deborah!" "Blessed be Yahweh!" And here and there a mocking jest was aimed at Barak, who had missed the glory of striking down the enemy's commander, and had been anticipated by a woman. "Ah!" they said, with a laugh, "that is because he was afraid to go to battle without Deborah."[1]

And she, Deborah the heroine, the inspired messenger of God, flushed with triumph, glowing with zeal for Yahweh and for Israel, and with hatred of the vanquished foe, burst into a song of victory, as the smoke of the thank-offering rose on high. She sang of the glory of Yahweh, who had revealed his might; she spoke of herself as the mother in Israel who had risen up and come to the rescue; she thanked Yahweh because common people and nobles alike had freely gathered under Barak's flag; she praised the tribes that had joined in the battle, and cast bitter taunts upon the cravens. Then she described the battle, in which the stars of heaven had fought against Sisera, and finally sang of the general's death, —

Blessed be Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite,
Blessed be she above all women of the tent!
When he asked for water, she gave him milk —
Gave him rich milk in her costliest bowl.
She laid her hand on the tent-peg,
Her right hand grasped the workman's mallet.
Then she smote Sisera, pierced through his head,
She crushed it, she pierced it as he slept.
Between her feet he bowed, he fell, and lay low.
Between her feet he bowed and fell.
Where he bowed down, he fell disfigured.

The mother of Sisera looks through the window;
She looks through the lattice lamenting.
"How long is his chariot stayed!
How long ere we hear its wheels!"
Her prudent court ladies reply,
While she keeps repeating her words: —
"Has he not spoil to divide?
A slave-girl — nay, two — for each hero,

[1] Judges iv. 8, 9.

And splendid array for Sisera,
A booty of dyed and glorious garments,
A cloth of gold for his loved one's neck!"

So perish all they that hate thee, O Yahweh!
And be they that love thee like the sun going forth in his might.

We turn with a certain feeling of horror from a woman who, herself a mother, could thus mock a mother's grief, and praise the treacherous and cruel act of Jael. May this horror never grow less! Yet we must not forget that such cruelty, treachery, and bloodthirsty triumph are but the dark background of the patriotism and religious devotion which strengthened these heroes to make the heaviest sacrifices and to brave death itself in the cause of their people and their people's god.

Chapter XVI.

THE ORIGIN OF THE SANCTUARY AT DAN.

Judges XVII. and XVIII.

FROM the southern flank of the plain of Jezreel, right down to the desert, Canaan is intersected by a range of mountains, the northern portion of which used to be called Mount Ephraim, while the southern part, though separated from the other by no natural boundary, bore the name of Mount Judah. Now, somewhere in Mount Ephraim there lay, in the time of the Judges, a village called Michah-stead, in honor of its chief inhabitant, round whose house the huts of his laborers were ranged. Michah had also a private chapel provided with a *teraphim* and an *ephod*. We know but little of the form of these objects or the method in which they were used; but it appears that the *teraphim* was an image about the size of a man, and partly, at least, of human form,[1] and that the *ephod* was the priestly garment, worn officially at the consultation of the oracle. Michah had appointed one of his own sons as priest, and paid him wages for his services. This was a time of confusion and caprice; every one did what he thought fit. Thus a wandering Levite of Bethlehem in Judah happened once to visit Michah's village. He was hospitably received at

[1] 1 Samuel xix. 13, 16, where *teraphim* must be read for "image."

the great house, and was asked by Michah who he was, whence he came, and whither he was going. When the Levite told him his descent, and said that he was on the look-out for some engagement which would enable him to settle down, his host proposed that he should stay with him and be his "father and priest." Besides board and lodging, he would give him ten pieces of silver a year and a suit of clothes. The Levite accepted the offer, took up his abode in the village, was treated by Michah like one of his own sons, and received his wages punctually. Michah himself was delighted to have the young man with him, for he said, "Now I am sure that Yahweh will bless me, because I have got this Levite for a priest."

We have already said that this was a time of disorder, and there was no king in Israel. The circumstances of the tribe of Dan may serve as an example of the state of things that existed then. This tribe had never yet acquired a suitable territory, and some of its families were still without settled homes. The Danites were probably prevented from spreading southwards both by the Philistines, who were now recovering from their first shock, and by the Judæans, who were pushing northwards; and, on the other hand, the "house of Joseph" had seized all the land north of them. Be this as it may, there were certain families about Zorah and Eshtaol who despaired of obtaining any lands in that neighborhood, and were compelled to look elsewhere for an escape from their difficulty. They had heard that in the far north of the land there were still districts that they might conquer; so they sent five of the bravest and most trustworthy of their number to go and see whether it was so. These men happened to pass by Michah-stead on their way, and were hospitably received there. As they spent a night in the place, they happened to hear the young Levite mentioned. They were so much interested in what they heard that they questioned the Levite himself as to his history, and then, fully relying on his knowledge, asked him to consult the oracle for them. The Levite put on his *ephod*, consulted his *teraphim*, and gave them the assurance they desired; namely, that Yahweh would grant them success.

The five Danites now went on further northward till at last they came to Lais or Leshem.[1] This place was situated in a beautiful and fertile valley at the foot of the great Hermon. Moreover, it seemed likely to prove an easy prey, for the inhabitants were not warriors, but lived peaceably, like the Sidonians, by commerce, and as a rule, therefore, no one ever

[1] Joshua xix. 47.

troubled them. They were too far from Sidon to be able to gain assistance from that city. Their safety consisted in their being forgotten.

Now that they were discovered their fate was sealed. For as soon as the five Danites had returned and given an account of heir discoveries to their tribesmen, the latter perceived that "their god had destined that good land for them," and set out for it as quickly as possible, with a strength of six hundred fighting men. Their first halting place was behind Kirjath-jearim in Judah, at a place which is still called after them, "the camp of the Danites." Then they entered the mountain district, and came to Michah's village.

As soon as they caught sight of it the five scouts said to their companions, "Do you know that a *teraphim* and an *ephod* are in this hamlet? Now, you know what to do!" Yes! They needed no further hint, but entered the village, found the Levite's house, and asked him for a blessing. While they kept him engaged in this way, the five scouts ascended the hill upon which the chapel was built, and took out the image and the priestly garment. But the priest saw them, and called out, "What are you doing there?" "Hush!" they replied. "Your finger on your lips! Come with us, and be our father and priest. Surely, you would rather be the priest of a whole clan of Israel than go on serving the dependants of one single man!" The priest found the prospect a pleasant one; so without making any further resistance he went with them, and even consented himself to carry the *ephod* and the *teraphim* in the middle of the band. The Danites now hurried on their way, and placed their women and children, together with their baggage, in the van for fear of being attacked in the rear by the people they had plundered. It was a wise precaution, for Michah called his dependants together and gave chase to the robbers. Though the Danites had a long start, Michah succeeded in overtaking them, and shouted out to them to halt. They did so, and asked with shameless impudence, "Well! what do you want with us?" "What do I want with you?" he answered bitterly. "You have taken my god, that I made myself, and carried off my priest. I don't know what to do. And then you ask me what I want with you!" Evasion would serve no longer, so the Danites threw aside the mask and answered plainly enough, "You had better not make such a noise about it; for some of our people are not to be trifled with. If they set upon you, there will be an end of you and all your dependants." Upon this they went on

their way, and Michah, seeing that they were too strong for him, turned back without having accomplished anything.

The Danites continued their journey till they came to Lais. The fate of her inhabitants was soon decided. Peaceful as they were, and far from every source of help, who should deliver them? They were all put to the sword. The Danites did not leave the city as exposed as it had hitherto been, but fortified it, and called it Dan after their tribal name. By-and-by they established a temple there, in which the former priest of Michah did duty, and was followed by his descendants as long as the sanctuary at Shiloh existed. Now this Levite was no other than Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Moses.

The object which the writer of this narrative had in view was to give his readers some information as to the origin of the celebrated temple of Dan. It is not quite clear whether he intended his story to reflect credit or disgrace upon this sanctuary. On the one hand we can hardly believe that he would have dwelt so minutely upon the faithless conduct of the Levite, calling special attention at the same time to the kind treatment he had experienced from Michah, and saying that he was loved by his patron like a son, unless he had intended to cast a slur upon the priesthood of Dan. How can he have approved, we ask, of the conduct of those five scouts who made such a base return for Michah's hospitality? But the feelings of the old Israelites on those subjects were not very sensitive, and their ideas of good and evil were far from being perfect. In their eyes, for the most part, the strongest was the best, and must be right. Was not the theft of the Danites crowned with success? Were not the children of this Levite priests at Dan for centuries — as long as the temple of Shiloh stood? And even if the writer disapproved of the manner in which the Danites came by their sacred objects and their priest, he can hardly have mentioned the great name of the grandson of Moses, except with the idea of conferring honor on the sanctuary.

But this old story has come down to us in only a modified form; and the motives of the writer who altered it, and the view he took of the sanctuary of Dan are as clear as daylight. He lived after the people of north Israel had been taken captive and their temple destroyed. He hated the sanctuary, for it had contained one of those golden images of a steer "with which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had

made Israel to sin." The old narrator had said nothing of any image of a god, and had spoken only of a *teraphim* and an *ephod;* and though the difference between a *teraphim* and an image is not very clear to us, the ancient Israelites certainly did not think them equivalent, as we should be inclined to do. The *teraphim* and *ephod*, which went together and seem to have been specially used in consulting the deity, had been longer established amongst the Israelites, and were regarded by many as less objectionable than a cast or carved image. One of the objects of the writer who worked up this old story was to throw a slur upon the golden (or rather gilt) image of a steer which had stood in the Danite sanctuary. With this object he prefixed the following introduction to the story[1]: —

Eleven hundred silver coins had been stolen from Michah's mother, and she had cursed the thief in her son's hearing. Now Michah had stolen the money himself, and he was so terrified by the curse that he confessed his guilt, upon which his mother, fearing that her son might fall into trouble in consequence of her curse, exclaimed, "May Yahweh bless my son!" Then she told him that she had made a vow to have an image of a god made with part of the money, if ever she got it back again. She kept her vow, and two hundred pieces of silver were given to the smith to be melted down and made into an image. This image was afterwards set up in Michah's chapel.

The interpolator always introduced this image, the infamous origin of which he had explained, wherever the *teraphim* and *ephod* appeared in the original narrative;[2] and he concluded with the statement that the Danites set it up in their temple, where it remained until the captivity. This last note proves that the writer had Jeroboam's golden image of a steer in view, for it was this image that was preserved in the temple of Dan up to the date he mentions.

A scribe of still later date than the interpolator, not content with the slur thus cast upon the image, attempted to vilify, as far as he could, the priesthood connected with it. Was this Jonathan a Levite, and even a son of Gershom, the son of Moses?[3] Impossible! He, at least, did not believe it, and he hit upon a simple but adequate method of removing the difficulty. He altered the name of Moses into that of Manasseh.[4] This was easily done, for in the old Hebrew

[1] Judges xvii. 1–4. [2] Judges xviii. 14, 17, 18, 20.
[3] Exodus ii. 22; xviii. 3. [4] Judges xviii. 30.

character, which had no vowels,[1] Moses was written, M S H, and Manasseh, M N S H. The names, therefore, only differed by a single letter. Thus altered, the name of Jonathan's grandfather naturally reminded the reader of the godless king of Judah, Manasseh, the idolater. To strengthen the impression still further, this scribe adds on first mentioning the Levite of Bethlehem in Judah that he was "of the family of Judah."[2] This makes no sense, however, for the man was either a Levite or a Judæan by descent. He cannot have been both at once; and the very reason why Michah was so delighted with his priest was that he was a Levite, and therefore not a Judæan. The scribe, however, added the note to indicate that this Jonathan was not worthy to belong to the tribe of Levi. On hearing this explanation my readers may not unnaturally ask: "How do you know all this? Is it only a guess?" Even suppose it were, it should not be rejected on that account, for at any rate it gives some explanation of that odd expression, "A Levite of Bethlehem of Judæan extraction," which is as absurd as "a Frenchman of London of English extraction." But as a fact my explanation does not, in this instance, rest upon mere conjecture, but is supported by tradition. You must know that in the centuries after Christ, when Hebrew had long been a dead language, the scribes took inconceivable pains to fix the text of their Holy Scripture as accurately as possible, and to preserve the pronunciation of the words from being forgotten. Now in this passage they wrote the N of the word M ^{N} S H in a peculiar way — "hanging," as it was called — and added a note to show that this was not an accident, but was done on purpose; and we are told by the Jewish tradition that the N was written thus because this Levite was really the grandson of Moses, but his actions made one think of king Manasseh, and that he is said to be "of Judæan extraction" for the same reason. The translation of the Romish Church, the *Vulgate*,[3] still reads "Moses."

After this digression we may return to the original story, which throws some light on the early religion of Israel.

Nothing could be more misleading than the idea of the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua that the Israelites had an elaborate code of religious laws, fixed forms of worship, and a regular priesthood, when they conquered Canaan. Centu-

[1] See p. 258. [2] Judges xvii. 7. [3] See p. 304.

ries later the greatest latitude was still allowed in matters of religion. The most important sacred object was the ark of Yahweh,[1] which was placed in a sanctuary at Shiloh,[2] between Bethel and Shechem.[3] But no one thought as yet of unity of worship. Every religious man who could afford it raised altars and *massebahs*, or built a chapel, as Michah did, and had worship conducted in it for himself and his dependants. Such chapels were by no means rare, and certainly gave no offence. Michah appointed his own son as priest, but it was only because he could not get a better, for he preferred a Levite as soon as he could find one. Nor was he alone in this preference, for the Danites also desired Jonathan to be their spiritual father. The history of Israel's religion shows that the Levites were everywhere preferred to others for the office of priests, and at last, in the course of centuries, acquired an exclusive right to its exercise.

We can readily conceive why their countrymen were so anxious to secure their priestly services. But before we explain this preference we must say a word or two about the time at which Michah lived. If this Jonathan was really the grandson of Moses, we must place these events, which took place while he was still young, very soon after the conquest of Canaan; and the fact that some of the Danites were still without a settled home seems to strengthen this conclusion. But, on the other hand, it is easier to place the expedition of the Danites to the far north, through the territory of the Canaanite king at Hazor, after Deborah's victory than before it; and we know that long afterwards certain clans, from time to time, still left their settled homes, if they had ever had any, in search of others. These migrations occurred as late as the time of Saul. It is quite possible, therefore, that this Jonathan was a descendant of Moses, through Gershom's branch, but not literally his grandson. The chief interest of the narrative, however, does not depend upon the exact period to which it refers.

What was the idea in the mind of such a man as Michah when he exclaimed: "Now I know that Yahweh will bless me, because I have got this Levite for my priest"? To answer this question we must have a clear idea of the duties the priest had to perform. The most important of them all was that of consulting the deity. Clothed in the *ephod*, and with the help of the *teraphim*, he inquired the will of God. We do

[1] See pp. 322, 323. [2] Judges xviii. 31. 1 Samuel i ff.
[3] Judges xxi. 19.

not know for certain how he did this, but sometimes the lot was employed. He asked, then, as occasion rose, whether a journey must be undertaken or not; whether a descent upon a neighboring Canaanite district would prove successful; whether a sick child would recover or die; and so on. It was not a matter of indifference, however, in what way God was consulted, and the answer was not fixed beforehand, for the deity might be made propitious or the reverse, and this might sometimes affect his decision. Before consulting him, therefore, a sacrifice was made to induce him to give the desired answer. Then, again, in case of disasters, the wrath of the deity must be appeased by sacrifice and penance. People wanted to know how they had excited the divine anger, and how to keep the Mighty One their friend. For all this a priest was needed. Now when Michah, for instance, employed his own son for this purpose, he can hardly have supposed him to know any more than he did himself about the way in which the deity ought to be served. But no doubt he thought that wisdom came with the sacred garment, and that a priest, by being constantly employed in the things of God, gradually learned better how to manage them. Arguing thus, a man might appoint his son to be his "father and priest." And yet, as a matter of course, he would prefer a Levite. For was not Yahweh the god whom the Israelite served above all others? And what did he know of Yahweh? That he had revealed himself to Moses; and moreover that he was a mighty god, for it was by his help that Israel had conquered his inheritance. But how must he be served? Each deity had his own special desires. How was Yahweh to be consulted and appeased? Michah, for instance, could not tell; nor could his son learn it except by degrees. But the Levites, the tribesmen of Moses, his fellow-workers, who had helped him to introduce the worship of Yahweh, in whose service they were so zealous, surely they understood these things. Happy the man who could get one of them to be his spiritual father!

Nothing could be more natural than this. And so there gradually rose a priestly caste in Israel, powerful and ambitious as such a caste everywhere and at all times is. The germs of a rule of priests, or *hierarchy*, were already present; and nothing can be more disastrous to the religious and moral life of a nation than such a rule; for it is the mother of fanaticism and stupidity. And yet it must spring up wherever people suppose that the deity can be consulted

by means of ceremonies which are not generally understood; wherever they fancy that his favor can be won or his wrath averted by sacrifices offered in a special manner, or by purifications and atonements; wherever they believe that he issues external commandments, such as abstinence from certain kinds of food, or the adoption of particular doctrines. In a word, the priest becomes powerful wherever the service of the deity is supposed to require knowledge which is not accessible to every one. This was the case in Israel as in all other ancient nations.

No wonder that the priests hated and persecuted him who taught that God requires from his worshippers nothing but obedience to the law of love. This truth puts an end to their power.

Chapter XVII.

GIDEON.

Judges VI. – VIII. 28.

FOR some time after the conquest of Canaan the Israelites only possessed a certain part of the district east of the Jordan. It consisted of the territories of Reuben and Gad and the district of Gilead, north of which the King of Bashan ruled. The power of this monarch, however, seems to have been but small, and his country was far from serving the Israelites as an effective bulwark against the Bedouins. These wandering tribes maintained themselves on the wide steppes between the Jordan and the Euphrates, and their rapacity was constantly excited by the fruitful Canaan, into which they made frequent raids, especially about harvest time, when rich booty might be easily obtained. From across the Jordan, along the great route of the caravans, these Midianites, Amalekites, or sons of the East, as they are indifferently called, penetrated to the plain of Jezreel, and then dispersed southwards over the territory of Manasseh. They spread terror and destruction everywhere. The Israelites were unable to resist them, and were compelled, in some places, to desert their homes in the valleys and to hide themselves in caves in the mountains, or to build strongholds among the rocks. But though they saved their lives in this way they

could not protect their crops, which fell year after year, together with a great part of their cattle, into the hands of the Midianites, for their bands followed the great highway of commerce, and overran the land as far as Gaza. The Israelites lamented their lot bitterly, but what were they to do? These sons of the East swarmed like locusts, and their camels were innumerable.

One of the places rendered unsafe by the Midianites was the village of Ophrah, the abode of the Manassite house of Abiezer, whose chief at this time was a certain Joash. One day Gideon, the son of Joash, was employed in thrashing wheat, but it was in a most unusual place. The Israelites used to thrash their corn in some open place, perhaps upon a hill, where the wind could carry away the chaff; but Gideon dare not do so now for fear of the Midianites, so he was thrashing in the covered shed where the grapes were pressed. While he was thus employed — naturally somewhat dejected — the angel of Yahweh came to him and said; "Yahweh is with thee, thou mighty hero!" His words fell upon the young man's ear like bitter mockery. "Ah, sir!" he answered, "if Yahweh were with us, would all these misfortunes come upon us? Our fathers have told us what wonderful things he did when he led them out of Egypt; but we see small sign of it ourselves. He has left us to our fate, and we have fallen into the power of the Midianites!" So spoke the hero in the bitterness of his soul; but he was terrified and ashamed when Yahweh turned upon him in all his majesty, and cried with a loud voice, "Go forth in the might now given you, and deliver Israel from the hand of the Midianites! Have not I sent you?" But Gideon shrank from the task thus laid upon him, and said: "Lord! How can I do this thing? My clan is the smallest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest member of my family. Can I put myself at the head of the Israelites?" But his courage rose when he received the answer: "You will smite the Midianites like a single man, for I will help you." Half convinced, he cried in supplication: "Give me a sign that it is indeed Yahweh himself that speaks to me. Let me bring a present, and do thou wait here till I have prepared it." "I will wait till you return," was the reply: and Gideon went to prepare a meal. When the food was ready he returned with meat and cakes, which he set before his exalted guest as he reclined beneath the sacred terebinth tree. But instead of eating the food he ordered him to put it on a

mass of rock that lay beneath the tree, and to pour the broth over it. Scarcely had Gideon obeyed when the other touched the food with the end of his staff, upon which a flame of fire shot up from the rock and consumed everything. At the same moment the angel disappeared. Gideon was now convinced of the divine dignity of his visitor, and cried out: "Woe is me! I have seen the angel of Yahweh with my very eyes!" But Yahweh quieted his fears by saying, "Be not afraid! Peace be with you! You shall not die." Then he built an altar in honor of this god, and called it "Yahweh blesses." It is still standing in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

Gideon was now ready to obey his god, and desired, in the first place, openly to break with the Baal-worship to which the men of his village and others had become addicted, and to restore Yahweh to the honor due to him. On the top of a hill near the village stood an altar consecrated to Baal, and close by it was an *asherah*, that is to say, the branch of a tree stripped of its twigs, such as was often placed near an altar as a religious symbol. In the night, therefore, after Yahweh had called him to deliver Israel, Gideon went to this idolatrous spot. He took ten servants and two oxen with him. With the help of his men he overturned the altar and built another of earth and stone in honor of Yahweh. Then he placed the wood of the *asherah* upon it, slaughtered one of the two beasts he had brought with him — a seven-year-old ox — laid it upon the wood and consumed it with fire, in honor of Yahweh. He had done all this by night, for fear of being interfered with by the villagers; but no sooner was it daylight than every one saw what had been done, and it did not long remain a secret who had done it. The friends of Baal rushed at once to the house of Joash, and called upon him to give up his son that they might put him to death for his sacrilege. But Joash answered: "What! will *you* take up the cause of Baal? Will *you* come to his rescue? Surely, whoever encounters his wrath will die before it is morning. If he be a god, then let him contend against the sacrilegious man himself!" Ever after Gideon bore the name of Jerubbaal, that is, "Let Baal contend against him," in memory of this answer.

The time soon came for him to begin his work. The "sons of the East" crossed the Jordan once more in countless hordes, and encamped by thousands on the plain of Jezreel. Then Gideon's warlike zeal burst into a flame. The trumpet rang through the air; the Abiezrites gathered

round him; his messengers hastened to summon the men of Manasseh and Asher, of Zebulun and Naphtali. Warriors streamed from every side to the mountains where Gideon had pitched his camp. Courage grew as numbers increased, but the hero placed his chief reliance on the aid of Yahweh. Was he certain to obtain this aid, however? He must place his assurance on this point beyond the reach of doubt. So to guard against moments of unbelief he prayed to his god: "O God! grant that when I have spread a fleece of wool on my thrashing-floor to-night it may be wet with dew in the morning, while the ground is dry all about it; then shall I know that thou wilt deliver Israel by my hand." His request was granted, and in the morning he could wring a bowl full of water out of the fleece. But he prayed again: "Lord! be not angry with me for coming to thee again! Let me repeat the trial of the fleece; but this time let the result be just the reverse." The miracle was performed, and in the morning he found the fleece dry, though the ground upon which it lay was drenched with dew. Gideon was now completely satisfied.

To arms then! He soon took up a position with his army upon a range of hills above the Midianites who held the valley. Then his faith was put to a severe test by Yahweh. "You have far too many people with you," said his god. "If you win the victory thus, Israel will exalt himself, and attribute the victory to his own valor and not to my help. Order every one who is afraid, to return home." Gideon did so; and although all the Israelites in the camp had come there of their own free will, yet twelve thousand of them deserted their standard on hearing the proclamation. Ten thousand remained. "There are still too many," said Yahweh once more to Gideon. "Take them to the brook in the valley, and I will show you how to decide which of them to keep with you." Gideon obeyed, and leading his warriors to the bank of the stream, he gave them leave to quench their thirst. Upon this most of them went down upon their hands and knees, but some few remained standing, and scooped up the water in the hollow of their hands. Gideon was instructed to set these last apart, for it was with them that he was to triumph over the foe. There were but three hundred of them! "Dismiss the rest," said Yahweh. "With these three hundred you shall smite the Midianites."

Gideon had need of faith to undertake his task! And that

it might not fail him, another sign was divinely vouchsafed to him. For, by Yahweh's command, he went with his armor-bearer to inspect the camp of the Midianites by night. There it lay before him; even like locusts for multitude, and camels countless as the grains of sand on the sea shore! The regular troops alone of this great host were one hundred and thirty-five thousand strong. Gideon approached one of the outposts of the camp, and there he overheard a conversation between two of the enemy's men. "I dreamed," said one, "that a loaf of barley bread came rolling into our camp right against the general's tent and threw it down. There it lay stretched upon the ground!" "I can interpret that dream," sighed the other; "it can only mean the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, the Israelite. God has given all this army into his hand."

On hearing this Gideon fell down and worshipped. Yahweh had thus foretold their lot to the Midianites themselves. He hurried back and roused his three hundred men. He provided each of them with a trumpet and an earthen vessel in which a flaming torch was hidden. "Do everything that I do!" he said. "As soon as I sound my trumpet do you all sound yours, and at the same moment raise your war-cry, For Yahweh and Gideon!" All was soon ready. The warriors, parted into three bands, watched for the signal. It was the dead of night. Just as the enemy's sentries were being relieved, the sign was given. Then suddenly the trumpets rang; the earthen vessels crashed and fell in fragments; and from three sides at once the war-cry rose, "The sword of Yahweh and Gideon!" Panic seized the army of the Midianites. The three hundred never stirred a foot, while their enemies fled shrieking through the camp in utter confusion, or strove to conceal their treasures. The trumpets sound again. The confusion rises still higher. The Midianites draw their swords, and wildly attack one another. Then they rush eastwards to the Jordan in panic flight, some of them crossing the river, and others flying southwards.

On the following day the surrounding tribes of Israel were summoned to the pursuit. Gideon hastened to send messengers to Mount Ephraim with the command: "Let none of the Midianites escape! Cut them off from the passage of the Jordan!" This appeal found an echo. The Ephraimites came out to battle as a single man, and slew two of the Bedouin princes — Zeeb, or "the wolf," and Oreb, or "the raven" — at "Wolf-press" and "Raven-rock." They sent

their heads to Gideon, but accompanied them by anything but a friendly message. For now that the great blow had been struck, every one wanted a share in the glory. The Ephraimites complained that they had not been summoned to take part in the enterprise from the first. This reproach was cast against Gideon so angrily that, if in the pride of victory he had given a sharp answer to their unreasonable complaints, a fatal collision would have been inevitable. But he answered gently and modestly: "How have I harmed you by not calling on you before? Is not the gleaning of Ephraim richer than the harvest of Abiezer? God has given Oreb and Zeeb into your hand. What have I done in comparison with you?" By this answer the malcontents were pacified.

This interview took place east of the Jordan, for Gideon had crossed the river in pursuit of Zebah and Zalmunna, two other Midianite princes. In great exhaustion he reached Succoth and demanded bread for his three hundred men. But the inhabitants of the city, though Israelites themselves, refused his request for fear of the vengeance of the Midianites, whose fall they did not yet consider certain. Justly incensed, the warrior exclaimed: "Let me but first lay hold of Zebah and Zalmunna, and I will scourge you to death with thorn bushes!" At Penuel he experienced the same unfriendly treatment. "Your towers shall be overthrown when I return in peace!" he cried to its inhabitants.

Zebah and Zalmunna had still fifteen thousand men. All the rest — one hundred and twenty thousand — had already fallen! The army was encamped near Nobah and Jogbehah, in Bashan, never dreaming of an attack, when Gideon suddenly fell upon it, dispersed it, and captured both the leaders. Then he returned in triumph, and it went hard with the inhabitants of the cities that had doubted Yahweh's might! A young lad from Succoth that they picked up outside the city gave Gideon the names of its seventy-seven elders, and he fulfilled upon them his fearful threat. The towers of Penuel, too, were taken, and all the men of the city put to death. Then came the turn of the captive princes. Fixing his stern gaze upon them, Gideon asked: "What were those men like whom you put to death on Mount Tabor?" "Like you!" answered the captives, undismayed. "Like sons of kings!" "They were my own brothers," he went on; "the sons of my mother. I swear by Yahweh that if you had spared their lives I would have spared yours now." Then he said to Jether, his eldest son, "Come! rise and slay them!" But he was

still quite young and was afraid of the two princes. "Kill us yourself," said the Midianites, who shrank from the thought of falling ignominiously by the hand of a boy, "for such as we are deserve at least to fall by the hand of a man." In compliance with their request, Gideon drew his sword and slew them. Then he took the golden crescents which decked their camels' necks as booty.

When Gideon had thus delivered the land, the Israelites came and pressed him to become their king. But he refused to accept their offer, and declared that neither he nor his son should rule over them, for Yahweh was their only king. But he asked them to give him the golden rings which they had taken as plunder; for the Midianites, like all other Ishmaelites, were in the habit of wearing rings. The Israelites granted his request at once, and threw the ornaments upon a cloth which was spread out to receive them, until there was seventeen hundred shekels weight (about 32lbs. troy) of golden rings alone, besides all the other costly articles which they had taken. Gideon made an *ephod* of this gold and placed it in Ophrah; but it proved a snare to him and his family, for divine honors were afterwards paid to it. Meanwhile the power of the Midianites was broken for good, and Israel enjoyed another "forty years'" rest, while Gideon dwelt as a private citizen in his own house till he died, and was buried at Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

The great victory gained over the Midianites, especially the defeat at Raven-rock, was held in thankful recollection by the Israelites.[1] It is but natural, therefore, that the story should have been told again and again, and that in the course of time Gideon's exploits should have been greatly magnified. Indeed, it is quite obvious that the account in the book of Judges is full of exaggerations. To say nothing of the miracles which form a part of the narrative, it ascribes altogether fabulous numbers to the Midianite army! The two bands of Israelite warriors, which had to march round it in order to throw it into confusion on the night of the surprise, would have had at least a day's journey to accomplish, and would certainly have been unable to hear anything of Gideon's signal. The sound of the trumpets would not have reached a hundredth part of the Midianites, and in the centre of the camp the blaze of the torches would only have appeared as a faint spark in the distance. Nor was there

[1] Psalm lxxxiii. 11; Isaiah ix. 4, x. 26.

food enough in the whole of Canaan for such a host of men and beasts. And as tradition magnified the numbers of the enemy, so it under-estimated the means by which they were defeated, to the glory alike of Gideon's faith and Yahweh's power. Indeed, the desire to make Gideon accomplish everything with the smallest possible number of men leads the tradition to contradict itself. For we are told that after the night on which Gideon had raised a panic in the Midianite army by the aid of his three hundred men, the warriors of the surrounding tribes were called to the pursuit. But when he himself crossed the Jordan and fell upon Zebah and Zalmunna, he was only accompanied by his faithful three hundred. The victory at Raven-rock was won by the Ephraimites alone. What were these warriors of the northern tribes doing all the while? Are we to suppose that they did nothing but despatch the fugitives?

It is in the nature of popular traditions not only to exalt the fame of their heroes by depicting their exploits on a magnificent scale, but also to clothe them as far as possible in the garments of a later age. It is exceedingly difficult for most men to imagine the great ones of a former age entirely different from themselves in manners, religion, ways of thought and customs. So, too, certain facts which seemed to the faith of posterity unworthy, or even infamous, were gradually removed from the history of the conqueror of the Midianites. The writer who collected the popular traditions concerning him, and assigned him his place in the series of Israelite judges, carried this process still further, and transformed his Gideon into a man after his own heart. It is to him, of course, that we owe the statement of the number of years during which Israel was oppressed by the Midianites, and the forty years' rest enjoyed by the land after the triumph. It is he, too, who represents the whole of Israel as having taken part in Gideon's struggle, and offered him the regal crown; whereas all the tribes of the South, including Dan, Judah, Benjamin, Simeon, Reuben, and Gad, are passed over entirely without mention in the narrative itself. But in other and more interesting respects the character of this conqueror has been disguised almost past recognition.

In the first place, what was his real name? Not Gideon. This word means "hewer," and was a title of honor. In the same way the Hasmonean, who delivered the Jews from the power of the Syrian King,[1] was called Judas *Macca-*

[1] See p. 30.

bæus, or "the war-mace," and the Frankish hero who drove the Arabs back across the Pyrenees was called Charles *Martel*, that is, "the hammer." The real name of the conqueror of the Midianites was Jerubbaal,[1] or "Baal contends." In the narrative itself, however, this name occurs but once.[2] Everywhere else the hero is called Gideon, and the writer makes a surname of Jerubbaal, which he translates, "let Baal contend against him!" It is easy to see why he did so. He could not bear to think that Israel's deliverer should have had a name in which Baal's might was celebrated; for it suggested the question whether he was not a worshipper of Baal. The fact is that he was. No doubt he was also a worshipper of Yahweh, in whose name he called the tribes to battle; his family, too, evidently worshipped the same god, for the first syllable of the name of his father Joash is an abbreviation of Yahweh, who was indeed acknowledged by every Israelite as the god of his people. But in the time of the Judges numerous Baals were worshipped as well as Yahweh. It is exceedingly difficult to make out the relation in which these Baals stood to each other and to Yahweh; but this is only what we should expect, for "baal" means "lord," and is, therefore, a common name of deity, as well as a proper name of certain special gods. Now the Israelites, before the time of Moses, worshipped a number of Baals, and the service of these gods was by no means superseded by that of Yahweh. Moreover, the Canaanites, amongst whom the Israelites settled, had their own Baals to whom they consecrated sanctuaries, stones, and trees, or offered sacrifices. The fresh settlers mingled with the old inhabitants, and entered into alliances with them at their holy places. Only think what confusion this would cause! For instance, suppose a tribe, whose special god was called Baal-Gad, went to battle in the name of Yahweh, and finally concluded an alliance with a Canaanite tribe whose sanctuary was dedicated to Baal-Peor, — at this shrine Yahweh, Baal-Gad, and Baal-Peor would all be invoked by the same persons. Now were they three gods, or only three names for the same god? One can easily believe that the worshippers themselves did not exactly know, and that Joash, for instance, though a faithful subject of Yahweh, might call his son "Jerubbaal." In doing so he did not for a moment suppose that he was insulting the majesty of Yahweh.

[1] Judges viii. 29, 35, ix. 1, 2, 16, 28, 57; 1 Samuel xii. 11; 2 Samuel xi. 21.
[2] Judges vii. 1.

But in a later age a war against all these Baals was waged in the name of Yahweh, and his servants were passionately convinced that the worship of these gods tarnished the glory of the god of gods, the one only god, Yahweh. To find a champion of Israel with such a name as Jerubbaal could not fail to perplex and mortify them, and our author attempts to get rid of the scandal by making Jerubbaal a surname, and explaining it in such a way as to render it harmless, while he employs the title of honor, "Gideon," as a proper name. Others, however, seeking the same end by different means, slightly changed the name Jerubbaal. They altered "baal" into "besheth" or "bosheth," which means "shame," and so made the name into "Jerubbesheth."[1] There are other examples of exactly the same thing. Two of Saul's sons were called Meribaal, that is, "Baal's warrior;" and Ishbaal, that is, "man of Baal;" and David himself gave one of his sons the name of Beeljada, that is, "Baal knows." But in the book of Samuel the names are always given as Mephibosheth, Ishbosheth, and Eljada, that is, "God knows,"[2] so that we should never have known the idolatrous sound of the real names of these men if they had not been preserved in their original forms in the book of Chronicles, which was not in such frequent use among the Jews, and therefore escaped alteration.[3]

Tradition plainly declared that idolatry was practised in Gideon's neighborhood, and that he himself was not free from responsibility for the existence of a kind of worship which was very far indeed from reaching the standard of orthodoxy recognized in our author's day. But he could not believe that an idolater and breaker of the law could ever have received such aid from Yahweh: so he said that it was not until after he had won the victory that Gideon set up an image at Ophrah. Oddly enough he styles this image an *ephod*, though the word is always used of a priestly garment elsewhere. Gideon's conduct appears to have departed in some respects from the rules laid down, even in his own day, by those who were most zealous for the worship of Yahweh according to the principles of Moses. These points can still be made out with tolerable certainty from the history of Gideon's son, and we shall, therefore, speak of them in the next chapter. We shall also return in another connection to the subject of Gideon's declining the crown.

And now one word on the most remarkable trait in Gideon's

[1] 2 Samuel xi. 21. [2] 2 Samuel ii. 8, iv. 4, v. 16, and elsewhere.
[3] 1 Chronicles viii. 33, ix. 39, 40, xiv. 7 (iii. 8).

character, as sketched in the book of Judges, — I mean his faith. It is at Yahweh's command that he stands up to deliver Israel; it is on the help of this god that he relies when he makes ready for the fight, and at his command, therefore, he makes his attack upon the Midianites with no help but that of his little band of three hundred men. It is quite in the spirit of the prophets of Judah of the eighth and following centuries highly to commend this conduct; but are we to imitate them? With reference to Gideon's call, we must notice that in reality no such thing ever takes place. No one is ever called to any work by God in a supernatural way. Jerubbaal was a brave man, and it happened when numbers of heroes were longing for the fight, but none of them dared as yet to begin it, that he had special cause to come forward and call his tribesmen to arms. For the Midianites had murdered his brothers, and the duty of avenging them and slaying the murderers devolved upon him.[1] This was to him a call from God. We shall not blame him for girding on his sword in such a cause. On the contrary, courage is a virtue — even military courage. Love of his people and his family places the warrior, whom it urges to venture his very life in their cause, high above the craven. But it can never be easy for the Christian to feel any great admiration for a man whose hands are stained with the blood not only of armed foemen but of defenceless captives; nay, a shudder comes over us if we try vividly to realize that scene in which the hero says to his son, "Slay these princes!" and, when he is afraid, does it in cold blood himself! In ancient times people looked upon such an act with admiration; but, thank God, we cannot.

As for attacking a numerous enemy with a small force, we must bear in mind that it is not as a successful stratagem but as an act of faith that Gideon's conduct is held up to admiration. But we cannot let it pass as such, and should simply call it recklessness. "Gideon's band" has become a proverbial expression for a small but valiant knot of warriors; and a small nation fighting for its altars and hearths against the overpowering forces of a mighty foe, preferring an honorable death to a life of shameful slavery, does indeed excite our admiration. We honor the heroes whose love of their fatherland and their relatives inspires them with courage to take up arms without so much as counting their foes. Nay, sometimes even a small army, by dint of superior valor and determination, gains a victory over a large one. But, as a rule, *ten* are vic-

[1] Compare pp. 81, 82.

torious over *one*, without reference to the virtue or vice of either, or the respective merits of their causes. The shafts and bullets of the godless find the mark as well as those of the pious. The highest virtue is no protection against a sabre cut or a bayonet thrust. It is mere recklessness, therefore, deliberately to throw three hundred men into an engagement which careful consideration assures us would tax the powers of ten thousand. To do this on religious principles, and thus systematically to neglect the proper means of securing victory, is simply fanatical.

But "Gideon's band" is justly used as a term of honor when it is applied to those who fight for God and the truth against sin, against wrong, and against misery. For in this battle it is not by their own wish that the champions of the good cause are so few. Their numbers are small from the nature of the case, and sorely against their will, and they always have to face a foe that outnumbers them a hundredfold. If the battle were fought with earthly weapons their chance would be small indeed; and when their enemies have recourse to the sword the little band does often sink for a time: but in the long run it must always triumph. Its soldiers only fight with the spiritual weapons of their word and their example. Their object is not to slay their foes, but to raise them to higher virtue and greater happiness, and thus to convert them from enemies into allies. The power which inspires these "Gideon's bands" is faith in the irresistible force of truth,—that is, of God,—and in this faith they overcome the world.

Chapter XVIII.

ABIMELECH.

Judges VIII. 29–IX.; Gen. XXXIV.

GIDEON had seventy sons, says the book of Judges, for the number of his wives was great. And besides all these, he had a son whom he called Abimelech, by his mistress in Shechem. Now, after his death, the Israelites not only returned to their idolatrous practices, but forgot all the benefits they had experienced at his hands, and repaid them

with base ingratitude. For Abimelech conspired with the chiefs of Shechem to expel Gideon's seventy sons who now ruled the city; and, when the Shechemites had given him some money from the treasure of the temple of Baal-berith, or "Baal of the covenant," to carry out his project with, he hired certain men who would do anything they were paid for, and, with their help, murdered all his brothers at once. But the youngest, Jotham, concealed himself and escaped.

Then the Shechemite chiefs crowned Abimelech king, under the sacred oak that stood by the city; but Jotham took the opportunity of addressing them from Mount Gerizim, and told them a fable (which we shall give at length in another chapter)[1] about the trees, who desired a king, but could only get the bramble-bush to accept the honor. Finally, he reproached them with ingratitude towards his father, and prophesied that their new-made king would bring them little joy.

Within three years this prophecy was fulfilled. To punish both Abimelech and the chiefs of Shechem, for the hideous murder of Jerubbaal's seventy sons, God sent a spirit of distrust and dissension amongst them; and the Shechemites lay in wait for every one who passed by their city. Abimelech himself dwelt in Arumah, while a certain Zebul governed Shechem in his name. In the course of time Gaal, the son of Ebed, came to Shechem with his brothers, and won the confidence of the chiefs; and at last, on occasion of the feast of grape-harvest, celebrated in the temple of Baal of the covenant, the Shechemites threw off their allegiance to Abimelech, at Gaal's instigation. "Who is Abimelech?" he cried. "Who is the son of Jerubbaal,[2] that we should serve him? Is he not the son of Shechem; and is not this Zebul his deputy? Let him hold the men of Hamor, the father of Shechem, in slavery![2] But why should we obey him?" "If I had but command of this people," he added, "I would drive out Abimelech full soon!"

Zebul, who knew what was going on, immediately sent word to his master, and urged him to come with all speed to Shechem, and put an end to Gaal's proceedings. Abimelech acted upon this advice; and one morning, as Gaal was standing at the city gate with Zebul, he saw troops appearing from various quarters. At first Zebul only laughed at him, and told him he mistook the shadows of the mountains for men; but, when he could deny the fact no longer, he cried defiantly,

[1] See chapter xxiv. p. 459. [2] After an amended version.

"You spoke brave words but now. Well! There are Abimelech's people! Go out to meet them!" Gaal hastily accepted the challenge, but was driven back into the city with heavy loss. This reverse impaired his influence so seriously that he was soon afterwards expelled by Zebul, while Abimelech himself remained at Arumah.

But Abimelech was meditating a fearful vengeance on the Shechemites for their disobedience, and had resolved to compass their destruction. He collected troops, fell upon a number of the Shechemites (who were at work in the fields, suspecting no danger), slew them, and then laid siege to the city. As soon as it fell into his hands, he massacred its inhabitants, razed it to the ground, and "sowed the site with salt." The nobles, however, who lived in the citadel, assembled under the hallowed dome of the god of their covenant, hoping that the sanctity of the place would protect them. But what did Abimelech care for holy places? With a bill-hook in his hand he set off, at the head of his men, to a neighboring thicket. "Do as I do!" he cried, as he hewed a branch off a tree, and laid it on his shoulder. Thus laden, his troops returned to the sanctuary. They piled the wood upon the roof, and, before long, the thousand men and women, who had sought shelter beneath it, were burned to death or suffocated by the smoke.

Then Abimelech turned his arms against the neighboring city of Thebez, which had made common cause with Shechem. The place itself was soon taken, but the inhabitants had fled for refuge to a strong tower, situated in the middle of the city, which still held out. Abimelech determined to apply the torch once more and burn down the gate. But when he came under the wall to accomplish his design a woman hurled down a piece of a millstone and struck him on the head. Borne to the ground, with his skull fractured, he hurriedly commanded his armor-bearer to draw his sword and kill him, that no one might say he had been slain by a woman. His attendant obeyed. Such was the end of Abimelech; and his warriors dispersed, each to his own abode.

Thus did God requite both him and the Shechemites for the evil they had done in slaying the sons of Jerubbaal, and thus was Jotham's curse fulfilled.

The purpose of this story is so clearly explained in its closing sentence that we cannot for a moment misunderstand it. But, nevertheless, it presents some features of peculiar difficulty.

The relations between Abimelech, the Shechemites, and this Gaal are most perplexing. What was the object of Gaal "and his brothers"? Was it simply to create a disturbance, and then fish in the troubled waters? Or was he guided in his actions by some principle? And then, what is the meaning of that curious expression: "Let the men of Hamor serve Abimelech; but why should we serve him?" Who are the "we" that must not stoop to obey Abimelech, whatever the Hamorites may do?

Perhaps we should never have been able to answer these questions were it not that some light is thrown on the events at Shechem by a story of the patriarchal times. I mean the legend of Dinah contained in the thirty-fourth chapter of Genesis, the only story in which the daughter of Jacob appears. It runs thus: —

When Jacob had returned from Padan-Aram and had pitched his tents in the neighborhood of Shechem, Leah's daughter, Dinah, went out one day to visit some of the girls of the neighborhood; and Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of the land, fell in love with her, and enticed her with fair words and seduced her. Shechem, however, had honorable intentions, and asked his father's leave to marry the stranger. Hamor consented, and went to Jacob to request Dinah's hand for his son. When Jacob heard what had occurred he kept silence until his sons came home from the field, and when they heard of Shechem's unworthy conduct they were filled with grief and indignation. It was "foolishness in Israel." But Hamor still pressed the marriage upon Jacob and his sons; for Shechem had set his heart upon it, and Hamor himself had nothing against it. "Come!" said he, "let us make alliances on either side. Give us your daughters in marriage and take ours. Choose any place you will, and dwell amongst us. Go round our country unrestrained, and take up your abode with us." And Shechem himself added: "As for Dinah's purchase-money, you need not be afraid of taking advantage of the opportunity and asking a heavy price. I shall not draw back, if I can but get the girl for my wife!" But the sons of Jacob answered treacherously: "What you ask is impossible; for we cannot mingle our blood with that of the uncircumcised. If you will be circumcised yourselves, then we can intermarry and unite into a single people; but if not, then we shall take Dinah back and go on our way." Hamor and his son agreed to the proposal. Shechem's love for Dinah was so great that nothing seemed too hard for him;

and he had great influence with his fellow-citizens. He and his father persuaded them to comply with the conditions imposed by representing to them the great advantages they would derive from an alliance with Jacob and his sons; for they had numerous flocks, and there was plenty of room for them in Shechem's territory. So the Hivites were persuaded to comply, and underwent the operation of circumcision. But on the third day, when the wound inflicted is most painful, Dinah's brothers, Simeon and Levi, grasped their swords, fell upon the city, where no one suspected any danger, slaughtered every male creature, snatched Dinah out of Shechem's palace, and then went on their way. Then the sons of Jacob came and plundered the city. Now when Jacob heard what Simeon and Levi had done, he said to them: "I am utterly undone, for you have made me hateful to the dwellers in the land, the Canaanites and the Perizzites. Think how few we are in number! If they fall upon us we are all undone." But they only answered: "Shall they treat our sister as a harlot?"

In the form of a family history of the Patriarchal period, the narrator has here given us a fragment of the history of the Israelite people, or at any rate of some of the tribes. He betrays this fact with unconscious simplicity when he makes Jacob's sons speak of "foolishness being done in *Israel*," using this name as that of a people. The legend deals with one of the burning questions of the period of the Judges — the question whether Israelites and Canaanites might intermarry. The practice was very advantageous to both parties, and especially to the conquered race; but to the Israelite of pure blood, who looked down with contempt upon the old inhabitants of the place, it was an abomination. The Canaanites are represented in the legend under the person of Shechem, the son of Hamor, which shows that this question was debated in the city of Shechem, where the Hamorites, a Hivite tribe, were settled. This fact enables us to bring the legend into connection with the history of Abimelech, and to find the counterparts of the zealots, Simeon and Levi, in Gaal and his brothers.

If, then, we put together all the information we have gained about both Gideon and Abimelech, we shall have the following history: —

Certain cities in Mount Ephraim, including Shechem, Thebez, and Arumah, had entered into an alliance for the purposes of mutual protection and the maintenance of their independence. The inhabitants of these places were partly

Canaanites and partly Israelites. They had laid aside their mutual jealousies for the sake of the common good, and though not yet united into a single people, they had already laid the foundation of such a union, especially by the adoption on the part of the Canaanites of the circumcision. The allies had a common sanctuary, that of "Baal-of-the-covenant," at Shechem; and there they worshipped Yahweh, the God of Israel, together, it may be, with many other deities.

Now when the cities of the league were brought into dire straits by the Midianites, the common danger united the Israelites and the Canaanites still more closely. At last Jerubbaal of the Abiezrites put himself at their head and defeated the common enemy, thereby earning the title of honor, *Gideon*. As long as he lived the covenant was faithfully observed. His redoubtable name and his strong arm restrained the various parties within the cities from expressing their differences in action.

But when he was dead, and they were no longer threatened by a foreign foe, everything changed. In the territory over which the alliance spread, there were, indeed, seventy local chiefs of families — represented as sons of Gideon in the legend — but none of them succeeded to Jerubbaal's influence or power. At last the Shechemites grew weary of the constant disorder, and furnished Abimelech with the means of seizing the Government. Indeed, he was actually proclaimed king — the first instance of the regal dignity in Israel. He was a valiant warrior; his body-guard of mercenaries inspired fear on every side, and he restrained the restless spirits of the place by force. But, in the end, party feeling ran too high for him. There were many malcontents at Shechem, at Thebez, and elsewhere. The Israelite zealots for the Mosaic principles were specially loud in their condemnation of the alliance with the Hivites. A certain Gaal placed himself at their head, and fostered their hatred against the Hamorites. "What if they had adopted the circumcision! There must be no communion with those unchaste worshippers of foreign gods!" In short, Gaal inflamed the Israelites to such a degree that at last, on occasion of a harvest feast in the temple of Baal-of-the-covenant, things came to an open breach. (It may be noticed, in passing, that the presence of the Israelite zealots, on occasion of a feast in this temple, proves that Yahweh was worshipped there.) "Who is Abimelech?" they cried. "Is he not a heathen on the mother's side? That is why he has no principles, but tries to keep in with both sides. Half Israelite, half

Canaanite as he is, let the Hamorites serve him! But why should we, who are Israelites, obey him? Down with him!" As the Israelites were in a great majority at Shechem, the city fell into their hands without a blow. Zebul, Abimelech's governor — himself, no doubt, an Israelite — appeared to fall in with the change, and raised no opposition; but he secretly gave Abimelech notice of what had occurred. Doubtless the Canaanite inhabitants had a hard time of it, as long as Gaal was master of the place. Some of them would be murdered, the houses of others plundered, and many would be expelled from the city: for Shechem must be purged of all that was foreign to Israel. The course of events was the same at Thebez.

But Abimelech was not to be dethroned so easily, and before long he defeated Gaal's adherents in a battle. Zebul was now once more powerful enough to expel his rivals; and the party that desired peace above all things, and therefore wished for the closest possible union with the Canaanites, rose once more to power. But this did not content the exasperated ruler. Every Israelite who had taken part with the zealots must be punished for it. An example must be made of these rebels, for the benefit of Shechem and Thebez! Abimelech accomplished his wish, but fell at the tower of Thebez. This was the end of his rule; but what became of the league amongst the cities we cannot tell.

Such, in all probability, was the course of events at Shechem and in the neighborhood. Gideon and Abimelech, who are represented in the book of Judges as exactly opposite in character, were, in reality, kindred spirits, and followed the same line of action. It is easy enough to understand why they are presented by tradition in such different lights. A successful man is sure of praise. All the blame falls on those who fail. It is the way of the world. Jerubbaal had delivered the land in which he lived from the power of the Midianites, and posterity, therefore, pictured him as a pious hero who had enjoyed the favor of Yahweh. Abimelech had failed to retain the inheritance of his father, his reign had ended in bloodshed and in ruin, and the consequence was that nothing was too bad to find ready belief concerning him. In reality, Abimelech trod in Jerubbaal's footsteps; but it is not difficult to understand why their supremacy came to nothing, for it had never rested upon firm foundations. Common interest had drawn the inhabitants of

certain cities together and kept them united for a time, but the differences of character between them were such as to prevent any real friendship. Fear of the Midianites held their animosities in check at first, and Jerubbaal's rule had ended in peace. But the bond of union between the parties disappeared as soon as the common danger had passed. Abimelech had to maintain himself by the aid of a band of mercenaries. Such a supremacy can never last, but must sooner or later fall.

Gaal appears as an opponent of the policy of Jerubbaal and Abimelech. His father is called Ebed or "slave" in the Hebrew text; but his real name was probably Jehobaal, or "Yahweh is Baal." So at least we find him called in the Greek translation of the book of Judges, and we can easily understand why the scribes should dislike, and, therefore, alter, this name.[1] We know nothing more of this Gaal; but we see from the legend of Dinah that the Levites and Simeonites were distinguished as zealots. This also appears from the way in which they are mentioned in the so-called "blessing of Jacob."[2] The words run thus[3]: —

Simeon and Levi are brothers,
  Their swords are the tools of violence;
May my soul never enter into their plans,
  Nor my heart ever join their assembly!
For in their wrath they strike men dead:
  Whenever they will, they ham-string oxen.[4]
A curse on their wrath, for it is so heavy!
  A curse on their anger, for it is so fierce!
I will divide them in Jacob
  And scatter them in Israel.

Simeon and Levi, or rather the Simeonites and Levites, are here charged with tyrannical violence; but their conduct evidently does not spring from mere delight in slaughter or desire of spoil, for they do not take possession of their enemies' cattle, but "*ham-string* the oxen," — that is to say, disable them by cutting the sinews of the hams. They must have acted from some higher motive than rapacity. Many of the Simeonites and Levites were champions of the Mosaic principles, and were, therefore, zealous in preserving the purity of Israel and opposing alliances with the Canaanites. We shall meet with them again in the same character. The author of the "blessing of Jacob" speaks of their conduct with great severity, and ascribes their scattered condition among the tribes to the violence of their actions. It is only

[1] See pp. 391, 392.
[2] See pp. 102, 226, and 366.
[3] Genesis xlix. 5–7.
[4] After an amended version.

too easy to understand his disapproval; for comparatively few men have the courage to carry out a principle which they believe to be good without asking what the consequences will be. Most men are too timid and faithless to do right without counting the cost. "You are destroying me!" cries father Jacob, in the legend of Dinah, to his indignant sons. "You are making the Canaanites hate me. We are but few. They will root us out." The remonstrance was most natural. From a worldly point of view it was far more sensible to join the Canaanites than to repel them. It would strengthen the Israelites against all their foes, and they might pasture their flocks, engage in commerce, and cultivate the fields undisturbed. If a nation could enjoy no greater blessings than these, if the possession of such things ensured its well-being, then it would indeed be mere folly to disturb such a peace.

But if prosperity, peace, and abundance are no set-off against the degradation of a people, then the folly of disturbing peace is sometimes the highest wisdom. Shechem's conduct towards Dinah and her relatives was shameful: but Jacob thought, "Ah, well! let us have peace in spite of it all! It is better for us to overlook such things." "Shall they treat our sister like a harlot?" is the only question for Simeon and Levi. Surely this is far nobler. Of course we cannot approve of the methods adopted by these fierce zealots of Yahweh, who tried to reform the world by blood and iron; but they stand far higher in our estimation than those ignoble, commonplace, order-loving creatures, who will submit to any humiliation, and sacrifice the noblest principles, "for the dear sake of peace."

> "I will divide them in Jacob,
> And scatter them in Israel,"

sang a poet who saw the Levites and Simeonites scattered amongst the people. Some of the Simeonite allies of Judah may formerly have had a territory of their own, but it was only a small one, and was soon lost in that of Judah. Other portions of the tribe lived among their northern brethren.[1] As for the Levites, they were so completely scattered that there was no district in any part of the land inhabited exclusively by them. Many centuries later, when Levi had become the priestly tribe, the Israelites said that the Levites had received no territory, because they had been priests from Moses' time onward, and as such possessed separate cities in every part

[1] 2 Chronicles xv. 9, xxxiv. 6.

of the land, and were supported by the sacrificial offerings.[1] But this is not true. Had it been so, the writer of "Jacob's blessing" would never have regarded their dispersion as a punishment, or put the Simeonites in the same class with the Levites.

We have already noticed[2] the real reason why the families of these two tribes were so completely scattered amongst the rest. It was probably the Levites and Simeonites who supported Moses in furthering the common interests of the tribes, and introducing the worship of Yahweh. To accomplish this task they must, from the very nature of the case, have been dispersed among their brothers; and this is probably the explanation of the fact that some of them penetrated Canaan from the east with the tribes under Joshua, and others from the south with Judah.

The zealots did not grow rich in this way. It was not in the natural course of things that they should. Mixing water with wine is a better road to fortune than uncompromising truth to principles and fidelity to the common weal. Simeon disappeared altogether amongst the other tribes. Many of the Levites, as we shall see, had to contend with bitter poverty, unless they were lucky enough to obtain some lucrative post as priests.

Most of these zealots, then, reaped no advantages themselves from their uncompromising firmness. But they did their people a truer service than Jerubbaal, "the hewer," who delivered them from the power of the Midianites; for they preserved Israel's most precious treasure — its special character as a people, and the worship of Yahweh, in the spirit taught by Moses.

Chapter XIX.

JEPHTHAH.

Judges X. 6–XII. 7.

THE writer of the book of Judges, assuming that the heroes of the olden time followed each other in regular succession, tells us[3] that, after the death of Abimelech, Tola of Issachar delivered Israel, and ruled as judge for three-and-

[1] Deuteronomy x. 8–9; Joshua xxi. 1–42. [2] See p. 323.
[3] Judges x. 1–5.

twenty years. He lived at Shamir in Mount Ephraim, and was buried there when he died. After that, our author tells us, Israel was governed for two-and-twenty years by Jair, the Gileadite, of whom it is said that he had thirty sons, riding on thirty asses, and that thirty places in the land of Gilead were called "Jair's villages," after him. We know rather more of this Jair than is told us here, for he is mentioned in some other passages,[1] in which, however, his conquests are attributed to Moses. From what we learn of him in all these passages we can make out pretty well how he gained his place among the "judges." He was a Manassite of the clan of Machir, and appears to have crossed the Jordan at the head of a number of families in hopes of winning a better heritage in Bashan. Taking Gilead as his starting point, he made himself master of the district that was afterwards called in his honor Havoth-Jair, or "Jair's villages." Our author says these villages were thirty in number, but elsewhere[2] they are said to be three-and-twenty. Each separate place was called, as usual, by the name of the hero who had conquered and settled in it; and since the heroes themselves were all subject to Jair, and all positions of dependence were compared in ancient times to the relation of sons to their father, these village chiefs were called Jair's sons. In virtue of their rank they rode upon asses. A similar description occurs in the accounts of Gideon, Ibzan, and Abdon.[3]

Gilead, the land to which Jair had led his men with such success, is also the scene of the history of Jephthah, to which we must now turn. The writer of the book of Judges provides this story with an introduction,[4] in which he tells us that the Israelites had served all manner of gods and had been oppressed, in consequence, for eighteen years by the Philistines and the Ammonites. Then they confessed their guilt before Yahweh, and he promised to deliver them if they would relinquish their Baals. This as we know already was the style of remark by which this writer always strung together the old traditions about the heroes of the period of the judges. Then comes the story of Jephthah, which runs as follows: —

Gilead, the district east of the Jordan, was sighing under

[1] Deuteronomy iii. 14; Numbers xxxii. 41; Joshua xiii. 30. Compare p. 329.
[2] 1 Chronicles ii. 22.
[3] Judges viii. 30 ff. Compare pp. 394, 399. Judges xii. 8–15.
[4] Judges x. 6–16.

the oppression of the Ammonites. It will be remembered that before the Israelites bid adieu to the Arabian desert these Ammonites had been deprived of a part of their possessions by the Amorites; but that these invaders were themselves expelled by the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who thus became the neighbors of the Ammonites.[1] Now the mountain land of Gilead was a most desirable possession, and the Ammonites and Israelites were constantly struggling for it.

Just at the time of which we are speaking, the Israelites had been brought very low in this contest. Their leaders, well nigh at their wits' end, held a council at Mizpeh, a place on the border-land, where there was an anointed stone (afterwards looked upon as the monument of an agreement between Jacob and Laban[2]) and a sanctuary of Yahweh, connected, no doubt, with this *massebah*. The Gileadites were keenly alive to the necessity of uniting under a single leader; and, however little inclined to give up their freedom, they made up their minds to obey the orders of any one who could rescue them from their miserable plight. Accordingly, they began to consider whom they could induce to put himself at their head, and they soon remembered a famous warrior of the name of Jephthah. He was a Gileadite by descent; but no one knew to what clan he belonged. He had enjoyed but small success as yet; for he possessed no land of his own, and had penetrated into the neighboring district of Tob, with a band of freebooters, in the hope of conquering a home, as Jair and others had done before him. It was this bold warrior to whom the elders of the Gileadites determined to appeal.

But Jephthah was not inclined, at first, to comply with their wish. He had no very pleasant recollection of his former home, and by no means desired to return to it. But, on the other hand, he was fascinated by the thought of being Prince of Gilead for life; so when the chiefs swore by Yahweh that they would recognize him as such, he yielded to their persuasions, and followed them to Mizpeh, where the compact was solemnly renewed in the sanctuary.

First of all he sent an embassy to the Ammonites, to induce them to lay down their arms, but without success. There was nothing left but an appeal to the sword. Then the spirit of Yahweh came upon Jephthah; and, burning with warlike zeal, he passed through Gilead and Jair's vil-

[1] See *ante*, chapter x. p. 325. [2] Genesis xxxi. 45–52.

lages, summoning the inhabitants to battle for the honor of Yahweh. He even sent messengers to their kinsmen, the Ephraimites, on the other side of the Jordan. The Ephraimites were deaf to his appeal; but in Gilead and the neighborhood his words found an echo, and an army had soon assembled at Mizpeh. And now the battle upon which so much depended must be fought. If Israel were defeated then Gilead must give up all hope of retaining its independence, and must bow beneath the yoke of the sons of Ammon, while Jephthah must flee the land once more and rove about as a freebooter. The risk was enormous. The enemy was powerful; the Gileadites but too familiar with defeat. But the affair was far from hopeless. Under their new leader the warriors were full of enthusiasm. Their war-songs echoed on every side. They recounted with pride the exploits of their fathers, and boasted of their own heroic deeds against beasts of prey or the former inhabitants of the land. Listen to the various bands, gathered round their watch-fires, as they vie with each other in hurling taunts at the Ammonites, bragging of what they are going to do, and vowing sacrifices to their household or tribal gods should they return home in safety! The spirit of the people was excellent. If Yahweh would but help, the victory was certain. If he would but grasp his shield and spear, and go forth before his people thirsting for the battle, if he would but march before them in thunder and hurl his arrows into the midst of the foe, then panic fear would seize them and Israel would strike them dead. But would Yahweh yearn for the battle? Would he put forth all his strength in the fight with Chemosh? Day after day the priests made the meat-offering smoke before him, to secure his help. The *massebah* flowed with oil and blood. Bands of warriors were ever marching round the altar with their gifts. At last the general himself, burning for victory, made a solemn and terrible vow. Stretching out his hand towards the door of his home, he cried: "As sure as Yahweh lives, if I return in triumph from the fight with the Ammonites, whoever first comes out from yonder door to meet me shall be made a sacrifice to Yahweh!" The priest has accepted the oath. The vow is made. Unhappy father! Think who it may be that comes from that door to meet you! It may be a slave, perhaps. Yes! but you have an only child at home. Will you pay that price for the victory? Are you ready to give up your child should Yahweh require so great a sacrifice?

The vow that was made in a moment of fierce enthusiasm must be fulfilled when the excitement that dictated it had passed away; for the Ammonites were utterly defeated, and twenty of their cities fell into the hands of the Israelites. There was no doubt as to the victory, and it only remained to be seen what was the sacrifice that Yahweh had chosen.

Jephthah returns in triumph. He draws near to Mizpeh and comes in sight of his own home. A troop of girls come out to meet him, waving branches, sounding tambourines and cymbals, preparing to sing the victor's praise, to strew his path with flowers, and accompany him with festal dances to the shrine of Yahweh. At their head comes Jephthah's daughter — his only child. A sharp cry escapes the father when he sees her in the distance coming towards him. He rends his clothes, and breaks into bitter lamentation. "Ah, my daughter! You have caused me more woe than all my enemies!" What can it mean? A fearful presentiment comes over the triumphant warriors. The joyous music dies. The troop of girls draw near in silence. Every one gazes in an agony of suspense at the hero, who stands before his child the picture of despondent misery. At last the fearful words escape his lips. "Alas, my child! I have made a vow to Yahweh, and I cannot take it back!" Horror seizes upon all who hear him. They divine his meaning but too well. They understand the glance he turns upon his daughter. Her life is the dread price of victory which Yahweh claims, and they shudder to think that the father must give up his only child, and that she — so young and beautiful — must die.

But though the rough cheek of many a bold warrior in Jephthah's train was blanched, though the musical instruments fell from the hands of the shuddering girls, there was one still calm and brave. She, whom all are bewailing, has soon mastered her own emotion, and breaks a death-like silence by the words: "Father! if that be so, your vow shall be fulfilled. I am content that, by Yahweh's help, you have triumphed over the sons of Ammon." All eyes are turned in admiration upon the heroic girl, whose contempt of death puts to shame the boldest warrior; and even her father draws some comfort, in his agony, from the deep and self-forgetful love which she reveals for him. She speaks once more. "Father! I have one boon to ask. Give me two months before you fulfil your vow, and let me spend the time upon the mountains with my friends, to bewail my lot in dying unmarried." Of course

her modest prayer was unconditionally granted; and she went with her companions to the retreat she had chosen.

Meanwhile Jephthah was not permitted to give himself up to his grief undisturbed. His sword must not rust as yet. Now that the Ammonites were defeated, the Ephraimites became jealous of the victor's fame, and accused him (as they had formerly accused Gideon[1]) of not having called upon them for help. It was in vain that Jephthah reminded them how he had asked their help, and how they had disregarded his request. They crossed the Jordan, to "burn down his house over his head." So Jephthah was compelled to meet force with force. He summoned the Gileadites, who were flushed by the victory they had won, and in no humor to put up with the insolence of their brothers from the other side of the Jordan. The affair ended in a pitched battle, and the Ephraimites were defeated.

Their insolence now cost them dear. They had incensed the Gileadites to the utmost, by contemptuously styling them runaway Ephraimites, and declaring that Gilead really belonged to them, since it lay between Ephraim and Manasseh. The conquerors of the Ammonites could not forgive this insult. Indeed, they were so exasperated that they refused all quarter to the fugitives. Nay, they even kept the passes of the Jordan, and if any one came to ford the river, and declared in fear that he was a Gileadite, they put him to the test by making him say the word *shibboleth*, which the Ephraimites always pronounced *sibboleth*. All who betrayed themselves by their pronunciation were pitilessly put to death. The number of the slain was estimated at forty-two thousand.

So Jephthah had conquered all his foes, and become the undisputed lord of Gilead, over which he ruled for six years. But, alas! what a fearful price he had to pay for his success! Two months after his return from the victory over the Ammonites, he fulfilled his vow. The victim, crowned with flowers, was led round the altar with music and song in honor of Yahweh. She met her cruel fate without shrinking. But who shall say how sick at heart her father was, when he struck the fatal blow with his own hand, and saw the blood of his darling child poured out upon the sacred stone, while her body was burned upon the altar! Thus Yahweh received his own, and the price of the victory was paid.

The father can never have thought of the sacrifice without a shudder; but his countrymen soon recovered from the shock,

[1] See pp. 387, 388.

and only remembered the courage and self-sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter. All honor to the heroic girl, who freely gave herself up to death, and rejoiced that Yahweh had given her father the victory, even though her own young life was the price he had paid. The memory of her patriotism, and contempt of death, did not perish with her, but was long preserved in an annual festival, celebrated by the people on the day of her death in the mountain-land round Mizpeh. At this festival the girls spent four days in celebrating, with dance and song, the memory of the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite.

I have barely alluded, in the above narrative, to the negotiations carried on between Jephthah and the king of the Ammonites.[1] The king, on his part, pleads that when the Israelites came out of Egypt to Canaan they deprived him unjustly of his land; but Jephthah denies this, and recounts, in proof of his position, the events which occurred three hundred years before. These negotiations certainly formed no part of the old tradition, but were inserted by the compiler. It was not at all in the spirit of antiquity to inquire into the legal right by which this or that territory was held, still less to call to mind the history of the remote past in order to throw light on the question. Besides, the calculation that makes three hundred years elapse between the conquest of the district east of Jordan and the time of Jephthah is certainly incorrect; for the whole period between Joshua and David was not more than two and a half centuries at most.

The point in the history of Jephthah which has always excited the most attention is the appalling fact that he offered up his daughter as a sacrifice. Commentators have often tried to explain it away, and to make out that Jephthah did but consecrate his daughter to the service of Yahweh and compel her to remain unmarried to the end of her life. This idea was suggested by the remark, repeated more than once in the story, that she was never married, and by a certain unwillingness to admit that she was really sacrificed; for such an admission would leave a deep stain upon ancient Israel; and it appeared impossible to believe that a judge of the people, a man whom Yahweh had blessed, should have publicly performed such a frightful act. But, however difficult it may be to understand, the simple fact remains. We have no reason to suppose that the ancient Israelites believed Yahweh to prefer a single to a married life in his votaries, and if Jephthah's

[1] Judges xi. 12–28.

vow meant nothing more than these commentators suppose, surely his daughter need not have asked for two months in which to bewail her maidenhood, for she might have done that all the rest of her life. Moreover, we should have absolutely no explanation of her father's agony at their meeting, and of that festival at which the people sang of her for four days every year. But the whole question is in fact decided by the vow itself, which admits of no mistake: "I will dedicate to Yahweh, and offer as a burnt sacrifice, the first person[1] who comes to meet me." Nothing can be clearer than this. He promises a human sacrifice.

After what we have already learned of Israel's religion, we shall hardly be surprised at this. We need only refer to what was said with reference to Abraham's intention of sacrificing Isaac.[2] Indeed, we are quite unable to reverence the ancient Israelites as men of extraordinary piety and goodness. They were rude and uncivilized in the highest degree, and were still at a very low stage of religious development. Even those heroes by whose arm the people were rescued from their foes, and who performed their exploits in the name of Yahweh, were very far indeed from realizing our idea of piety. Besides, Jephthah stands lower than Deborah or even Gideon, for he would not gird himself to battle for his people until they had solemnly promised to make him prince of Gilead.

As for the sacrifice of human beings to Yahweh, the story of Jephthah not only shows us unmistakably that such a thing did from time to time take place, but also indicates the point of view from which we must regard it, if we wish to be fair to the Israelites. It arose from their belief that the deity might be persuaded, by promises, to accomplish the worshipper's desires. A person holding this belief — and in ancient times it was universal — might rise step by step, until at last he promised to offer up the most precious of all things — a human life. However horrible it may seem, it was the necessary consequence of a false principle. We can, therefore, understand not only that people admired the daughter — who submitted so courageously to her fate, and was content that her life should be the price paid for the victory — but also that they praised the father for keeping his word. It was not every one who was so scrupulous. A man would often make a vow like Jephthah's, and then, when the time had come for payment, would draw back, and substitute something else for that which he had promised. This was called "redeeming,"

[1] After an amended version. [2] Chap. xviii. p. 143.

and was practised by some more freely than by others. Finally, when manners had grown gentler, and human sacrifices were banished from the worship of Yahweh, these redemptions were regulated by the Law.[1] But, in the time of the judges, the old rule was still in force, that a human being, dedicated by a vow to Yahweh, must be sacrificed to him, and might not be redeemed. From this point of view, it seemed to argue disobedience and laxity if any one shrank from the strict fulfilment of his vow.

So far, then, we must honor Jephthah, for he would not break the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of Yahweh on a lie;" and kept his vow. In that frightful sacrifice that he performed — breaking the holiest domestic ties — we do but see the disastrous results of a mistaken faith.

Chapter XX.

SAMSON.

Judges XIII.–XVI.

AMONG all peoples who have begun to issue from a state of ignorance and barbarism, and to reach a higher stage of religion than that of the rudest and lowest *fetichism*,[2] we find indications of the worship of Nature and of the various heavenly bodies; first of the moon and then of the sun. And since the ancients were in the habit of throwing their religious thoughts and emotions into the form of stories or myths, we meet almost everywhere with "solar myths," or stories in which the sun appears as a person. His rising and setting, his fostering power in the spring, his consuming heat in the summer, and his failing strength in the autumn are described as the birth, the conflicts, the triumph, the defeat, and the death of a hero. Feasts were held in many countries at various seasons of the year in honor of the sun, or rather of the solar deity or sun-god. After the longest day, for instance, there was a time of lamentation, because the days began to grow shorter, and a day of rejoicing after the shortest, because they then began to lengthen again. Sometimes lamentations for the death of the setting

[1] Leviticus xxvii.

[2] See pp. 175, 176.

sun were immediately followed by rejoicings over his return to life. As a rule, the women more especially celebrated these feasts with passionate earnestness, and sang dirges such as, "Alas! the lord of the earth, the giver of life, is dead, slain by his enemies!" or cried, "Rejoice! the world receives new life, for her deliverer, the fountain of joy, is born!"

Many ancient solar myths have come down to us, but never in the original forms. This is only natural, for these myths are poetical effusions rather than precise descriptions, and though their main features may long remain unaltered, the details must be constantly changing. Moreover, when they were at last put into writing, it was by men who no longer retained the old simplicity of faith in them, and who, therefore, dissected and endeavored to explain them, and treated them more or less *euhemeristically*.[1] Thus the sun-god became a king, a priest, a hero, or a hunter, at the pleasure of the writer or to suit the habits of the people.

To take an example: The Egyptian Osiris was represented as a king of primeval times who not only fought against barbarism within his own domains, but journeyed through the world to spread the blessings of civilization everywhere. During his absence his wife and sister Isis carried on the government in the spirit of her absent lord. But Set or Typhon, the brother of Osiris, longed to restore the former state of lawless violence; so he conspired with a number of the nobles to murder king Osiris. To accomplish his design he had recourse to stratagem. He made a splendid chest, exactly fitting his brother's body, and then invited him, together with the conspirators, to a banquet, and offered to make a present of the chest to the man whom it should be found to fit. Hardly had Osiris got into it when the lid was clapped upon it, and the chest securely fastened and thrown into the Nile. It was carried away by the stream and across the sea to the Phœnician city of Byblus, where it was caught in the branches of a tree; and there it remained until at last the bark grew over it. Meanwhile Isis was wandering about the world, with her sister Nephtis, seeking her lost husband and lamenting him. At last she found the chest that contained his body, in front of the palace of the king of Byblus, inside the tree, which the king had felled, intending to make a column out of it. Then she returned, rejoicing, with her treasure. But in the joy of meeting her son Horos, she

[1] See pp. 105, 106. time of Alexander the Great who died 323 B.C.

neglected for a moment to keep watch over the chest, and Typhon found it, opened it, took out the body, cut it into fourteen pieces, and scattered them over the land. But Isis succeeded in finding every one of the pieces, and she buried each where she found it. Then Horos fell upon Typhon, to avenge his father, took him prisoner, and gave him over to his mother's care. But she allowed him to escape, and Horos, after severely reproving her, attacked his enemy twice and completely defeated him. Thenceforth Horos reigned over Egypt, while Osiris became ruler of the world of the dead.

The significance of the actors in this story is for the most part obvious. Osiris is the beneficent and fructifying sun, Isis the earth, and Typhon or Set the scorching heat, the cause of all material ill. This destructive sun-god conquers his beneficent brother and compels him to conceal himself; but Horos, the beaming sun, the successor and representative of Osiris, conquers Set, in his turn, and blesses the earth. Many traits in the story, however, are difficult to explain, — the passage, for instance, of the body of Osiris to Byblus. On the other hand we can easily guess the origin of the fourteen pieces into which the dead Osiris was cut. His worship was celebrated in many parts of Egypt, and was essentially the same everywhere. There were many places, therefore, in which his death was celebrated with lamentations and the grave of the good god pointed out. It was to explain this fact that the body was divided in the legend into so many parts. This example will suffice to show what a mistake it would be to suppose that the story as we have it is the original myth itself. It is only a legend founded upon it.

The same remark applies to all the solar myths that have come down to us. Thus we find a legend in Syria of Adonis, the beautiful youth that was slain by a wild boar when hunting, and thenceforth spent four months of the year in the lower world and eight upon the earth; a legend in Greece, of Herakles (Hercules), who performed twelve great labors, and then died on a funeral pyre and rose to heaven; in Phœnicia, of Baal, the ancient king, whose tomb was pointed out in so many places; in Babylonia, of Thammuz, the prophet, put to death by the king for trying to induce him to worship the stars. On his death, we are told, the image of the sun in the temple of Bel told the images of the gods which had gathered there from all the ends of the earth what had happened. Among the Norse-men we find the legend of Balder the good god, who was murdered by Loki, — but all these stories, and

many more, though originally solar myths, have been more or less transformed by those who put them into writing.

Sun-worship was by no means unknown to the Israelites, and was still more prevalent among the Canaanites. There were two places in the country, one in Dan [1] and the other in Naphtali,[2] called Beth-shemesh or Ir-shemesh, that is "house of the sun" or "city of the sun," and the deity worshipped under the names of Baal and Molech was really no other than the sun.[3] We do not know whether the name of the Danite city Beth-shemesh was of Canaanite or Israelite origin. The question is of no great consequence, however, for in this neighborhood the old and the new inhabitants soon became very friendly with each other, and before long all distinction between them was lost, though the population was still mainly composed of Danite and Judæan Israelites. The myths that were circulated amongst these people show that they were zealous worshippers of the sun. These myths are still preserved, but, as in all other cases, they are so much altered as to be hardly recognizable. The writer who has preserved them for us lived at a time when the worship of the sun had long ago died out. He transforms the sun-god into an Israelite hero who chastises the hereditary enemies of his nation terribly, but at last is conquered by them and dies, though not unavenged.

The legends to which I refer are those of Samson, for a solar myth doubtless lies at the bottom of them, as we may see by the very name of the hero himself, which signifies "sun-god." In some of the features of the story the original meaning may still be traced quite clearly, but in others the myth can no longer be recognized. The exploits of some Danite hero, such as Shamgar (who "slew six hundred Philistines with an ox-goad"[4]) have been woven into it; the whole has been remodelled after the ideas of the prophets of later ages, and finally it has been fitted into the framework of the period of the judges, as conceived by the writer of the book called after them.

It would delay us far too long were we to attempt to explain, point by point, the origin of all the stories about Samson. We must content ourselves with giving the legends themselves, only adding here and there a hint as to their meaning.

When the Israelites had given themselves up to all manner

[1] Joshua xv. 10. 1 Samuel vi. 9 ff. 1 Kings iv. 9.
[2] Joshua xix. 38. Judges i. 33. [3] Compare p. 318.
[4] Judges iii. 31.

of evil again, Yahweh sold them into the hands of the Philistines for forty years. In those days there lived at Zorah a Danite, called Manoah, whose wife was childless. But one day an angel of Yahweh appeared to her, and said, "Woman! hitherto you have longed in vain for a mother's joy, but now you shall have a son. Refrain, for his sake, from wine and strong drink, and eat no forbidden food, for he shall be a Nazarite of God from his birth upwards. The hair of his head shall never be cut; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the might of the Philistines." The woman told her husband what had occurred. "A man of God has been to me," she said. "I did not ask him whence he was, nor did he tell me his name; but his look inspired me with awe, like that of an angel of God;" and then she repeated his words to her husband. Never doubting for a moment the truth of what she said, Manoah prayed to Yahweh, "O Lord! let this angel come to us again, to teach us what we must do with the son that shall be born to us." Yahweh heard his prayer, and his angel appeared again to the woman. She happened at the time to be in the field, without her husband; but she hastened to fetch him, and cried, "The man that appeared to me has come again." Manoah hastened to the spot. The messenger of Yahweh was waiting for them; and, when Manoah asked him whether it was he that had visited his wife before, he answered that it was. Upon this Manoah said, "Then if what you foretold us comes to pass, what kind of life is the boy to live?" The angel replied, "Above all things, your wife must attend to what I said to her. She must neither eat nor drink of the produce of the vine." With these words, the divine messenger prepared to go; but Manoah, not knowing that it was an angel of Yahweh, said, "Stay with us a little while, and let us prepare a kid for you!" To which the angel answered, "Though I stay with you, I will not eat of your food; but if you desire to make ready a burnt offering to Yahweh, do so." Manoah, perceiving that his visitor was no ordinary being, now said, "Tell us your name, that we may know whom to honor if your prediction is fulfilled." But the stranger answered, "Ask not my name; it is a mystery!" Then Manoah took his sacrificial kid, and all that was needed to make it complete as a sacrifice to Yahweh. He had hardly laid it on a mass of rock, and offered it to his god, when, behold! the angel of Yahweh rose to heaven in the altar-flame, before the very eyes of Manoah and his wife. At this sight they fell to the earth in awe and reverence; and, when they

looked up again, the angel had disappeared. Manoah now perceived with whom they had been speaking, and said to his wife, "Shall we not die? for we have seen a god!" But his wife made the sensible reply, "Had it been Yahweh's will to destroy us, he would not have accepted our sacrifice, or sent us all these messages." The result confirmed the angel's prophecy. Manoah's wife had a son, and she called him Samson. When he grew up, they saw that he was loved of Yahweh, for the spirit of this god began to inspire him in Mahaneh-Dan, or "the camp of the Danites," between Zorah and Eshtaol.

At this point we will pause for a moment. Samson is called a Nazarite. We shall presently see who these Nazarites were; but their chief peculiarities are indicated in the narrative itself. They refrained from all the produce of the vine, protected themselves from ceremonial impurity, and allowed the hair of their heads to grow. The last point was the most essential, and it is also the only Nazarite peculiarity that is mentioned in the stories of Samson that follow. He was remarkable for his long hair. The meaning of this trait in the original myth is easy to guess, and appears also from representations of the sun-god amongst other peoples. These long hairs are the rays of the sun. As for the other points of the story of Samson's birth, it is likely enough that the mere desire to shed lustre on the origin of celebrated men, and especially to represent them as children for whose birth their parents had long waited in vain, led to the invention of the scenes in which the angel appears. But it is not impossible that they are part of the old solar myth, and that the angel who rises up in the flame of the sacrifice signifies the glow of dawn, that blazes against the heavens, and heralds the approach of the sun who brings the world fresh life.

We may now pass on to the account of Samson's exploits.

One day he went to Timnath, where he fell in love with a Philistine girl. When he begged his parents to ask her in marriage for him, they disapproved of the alliance, and said, "Can you find no Israelitish girl? Must you needs take one of these uncircumcised?" But they knew not what they said; for they little thought that Yahweh had ordained all this because Samson sought a quarrel with the Philistines. When their son persisted in his request, they granted it in spite of their disapproval, and set out with him to Timnath. On the way, as Samson was passing through some vineyards near the city, alone, he encountered a furious lion. But the

spirit of Yahweh came upon him, and he tore the beast as one would tear a kid, though he had no weapon in his hand. It was such a simple affair with him that he did not so much as mention it to his parents. His betrothal to the Philistine girl took place in due course, and a month afterwards he returned to Timnath to marry her. On his way he turned aside to look at the skeleton of the lion, and saw that a swarm of bees had settled in it, and had already stored it with honey. He took some of the honey to eat on his way, and gave some to his parents, but without telling them how he had got it.

The wedding took place, and Samson gave a feast, according to the custom of the place. But the Philistines were afraid of him,[1] and gave him a guard of thirty men, who accompanied him everywhere.

Now Samson asked these thirty men a riddle, and bet them thirty under-garments and thirty robes of state that they would not guess it within the seven days of the feast. It ran, "From the eater came forth food, from the strong one sweetness!" For three days they tortured themselves in vain to find the answer, but on the fourth[1] they went to Samson's wife, and said, "Unless you manage to get your husband's secret out of him and tell it us, we will burn down your house over your head. Have you asked us here to rob us?" She was so much frightened by the threat that she did as they desired, and tried to coax Samson into telling her the answer. "If you really loved me," she said, "you would tell me the answer to your riddle." At first he would not listen to her. "Why, I have not even told it to my father and mother," he said, "and shall I tell it you?" But she persisted in her entreaties, and at last he yielded to her blandishments and told her the secret. He soon saw that she had betrayed him, for before sun-set his body-guard came to him and cried in triumph, "What is sweeter than honey? What is stronger than a lion?" But Samson answered in wrath, "If you had not ploughed with my heifer you would not have guessed my riddle." Then the spirit of Yahweh came upon him once more, and he went to Askelon, slew thirty of the inhabitants, and gave their robes to the men who had guessed the riddle. But now, it seemed, he would have nothing more to do with his wife, for he went home to his parents. So she married one of his companions or groomsmen.

[1] After an amended version.

The chief features of this story are borrowed from the solar myth that lies at the foundation of the whole legend. To understand them we must remember the path which the sun appears to pursue in the heavens as the year goes by. In consequence of the earth's motion round the sun, the sun itself appears to us to be constantly changing its position in the heavens, as we see by its relation to the various constellations. In the twelve months of the year the sun rises and sets with twelve different constellations, which are called the signs of the Zodiac. They are, the Ram, the Bull, the Twins, the Crab, the Lion, the Virgin, the Scales, the Scorpion, the Archer, the He-goat, Aquarius (or man with the watering pot), and the Fishes. Now although it is tolerably certain that the Israelites' knowledge of the zodiac dates from before the invasion of Canaan, it is nevertheless highly improbable that the old myth described the passage of the sun through all the twelve signs. At any rate there are no clear traces in our story of any of them except the Lion. Samson rends a lion — that is to say the sun passes through the constellation of that name. This also gives us the clew to the riddle and its answer. As given in the story it is utterly unintelligible. In the first place it is not really a riddle at all, for the answer requires no ingenuity, but simply the knowledge of a fact of which no one could be aware. And, in the next place, such a question could never have been put, for bees do not build in putrefying carrion. Probably the riddle originally ran, "How can the sweet food, honey, proceed from a strong and ravenous lion?" and the answer, "When the sun passes through the Lion, the bees make their combs, and when he leaves it the honey is ready."

When the wheat was ripe for harvest (about April), continues the story, Samson went to see his wife again. He took two kids with him as a present, but of course her father would not let him see her. He expressed his deep regret, and endeavored to excuse himself by saying that he supposed Samson had taken a dislike to his daughter on account of what occurred at the wedding, and had therefore given her to one of his companions; but he was ready to give him her younger sister in her stead. It was all in vain. Samson was mad with rage, and exclaimed, "No one can blame me now if I punish the Philistines!" He caught three hundred jackals, tied them in pairs, tail to tail, with a burning torch between them, and drove them over the lands of the Philis-

times. The terrified animals rushed about in all directions, and set fire to the wheat that was standing in sheaves, as well as that which was still uncut, and even the olive gardens too. When the Philistines heard that it was Samson who had done all this, and learned what was the cause of his hostility, they vented their rage upon his wife and her father by burning them and all their relatives alive in their house. But Samson made this another pretext for revenge and slaughter of the Philistines.

Upon this the Philistines raised an army, and attacked the men of Judah, in whose territory Samson had established himself. They had got as far as Lechi when the Judæans came to ask them why they were making war upon them. They answered that they had come to punish Samson for the injuries he had inflicted upon them. Upon this three thousand men of Judah went to the rocky cleft at Etham, where the fierce warrior was to be found. He admitted that he had given the Philistines cause to hate him, and was even ready to allow the Judæans to bind him and give him up to his enemies, if they would only promise to do nothing against him themselves. They gave the promise, bound him with two new ropes, and carried him to Lechi. When the Philistines saw their enemy approach in bonds they raised a deafening shout of joy. But they rejoiced too soon, for at that very moment the spirit of Yahweh came upon Samson, the ropes by which he was bound snapped like burned threads, and the fetters melted from off his hands. His eye lighted on the jaw-bone of an ass. He seized it and slew a thousand Philistines. Then he shouted in triumph, —

> With an ass's jaw-bone have I slaughtered them,[1]
> With an ass's jaw-bone have I slain a thousand.

Upon this he threw away his weapon and called the place Ramath-lechi, which the writer translates "cast of the jaw-bone." Immediately afterwards he grew faint for thirst and besought Yahweh to help him. "See, Lord, thou hast won so great a victory by my hand this day, and must I now perish for thirst and fall into the power of the Philistines?" In answer to his prayer God split the hollow of the jaw-bone, and water flowed out of it for him to drink. This refreshed him, and the well at Lechi is still called "the well of the beseecher." Thus Samson judged Israel, in the days of the Philistines, for twenty years.

[1] After an amended version.

Now all this far exceeds the limits of possibility. It is no more possible for a single man to catch three hundred jackals alive than it is for him to slay a thousand men with the jaw-bone of an ass. It is strange and mysterious, not to say unaccountable, that just after the victory at Lechi Samson should find himself all alone, and should be afraid of falling into the hands of the uncircumcised. What had become of all the men of Judah?

Literally understood all this is absurd, but if we treat it as the language of mythology we shall see that it has a very intelligible meaning. In the reddish-brown jackals, with torches between their tails, we easily recognize the lurid thunder-clouds, from the projecting points of which the lightning flashes seem to dart; and the myth of Indra, given in the "Word of Preface,"[1] comes in most appropriately to explain the meaning of Samson's exploits with the ass's jaw-bone. This is in fact nothing but a symbol of the jagged thunder-clouds from which the lightning shoots. It has this meaning in the mythology of more than one nation. This explains why it is expressly said that Samson threw away his weapon after the victory, and that a spring rose from the hollow of the jaw-bone. When he has triumphed over his foes, the sun-god no longer uses the thunder-cloud as a weapon, but makes the rain pour out of it.

In this story the sun-god is still victorious over his opponents; but we shall now see him winning his triumphs with increasing difficulty, until at last he falls before the attacks of his enemies and dies.

Once, when Samson was paying a visit to a woman in Gaza, his presence in the city was betrayed to the inhabitants, and they determined to lie in ambush for him, and take him captive; but, as they did not suppose he would go away before daybreak, they took no measures to seize him that night. About midnight, behold! Samson rose up, seized the city-gates, gate-posts, bar and all, hoisted them upon his shoulder, and carried them to the top of the mountain that lies east of Hebron.

After this he fell in love again with another woman, whose name was Delilah, and who lived in the valley of Sorek. As soon as the Philistine princes heard of this, they determined to take advantage of his passion, and promised to give Delilah over a thousand shekels each if she could succeed, by her

[1] See pp. 8, 9.

endearments, in coaxing Samson into telling her the secret of his great strength. The traitress undertook the task, and said to Samson, "Do tell me how you could be bound so as to overcome your strength." He answered that nothing but seven cords, twisted of fresh, undried cat-gut, could hold him fast. These she got, and bound him with them as he slept; but hardly had she cried, "Samson! the Philistines!" when he snapped them as one would snap a thread scorched by the fire. His secret was evidently still his own. But the faithless woman persevered. "You have deceived me," she said, "and only told me a set of lies. How can you really be bound fast?" "With seven new ropes that have never been used before," he answered; but a second failure showed that Delilah had still failed to learn the truth. Teased for his secret a third time, he told her that she must weave in the seven locks of his hair with a piece of cloth, and pin them to the wall,[1] and that he should then be no stronger than an ordinary man. She followed his directions; but as soon as she awoke him with the cry of danger, "Samson! the Philistines are coming!" he plucked the pin and all that it held right out of the wall. And yet, in mentioning the locks of his hair, he had come nearer the truth than before. Delilah went on teasing him, day and night, to tell her the truth, till at last he was so worried that he told her all. "I have been a Nazarite of God," he said, "ever since my birth; and my head has never been touched by a razor. If my locks were shorn my strength would desert me, and I should be like an ordinary man." Delilah saw that he had told her all the truth this time; so she sent for the Philistine princes, and they came at once, bringing the bribe with them. Then Delilah sent Samson to sleep, with his head resting on her lap, and called a man to cut off the seven locks of his hair. Then his strength did really leave him, as he was soon to learn. When she roused him again with the same cry, "The Philistines, Samson!" he sprang up, as if to break his bonds, but felt at once that Yahweh had deserted him, and that his strength was gone. Then the Philistines laid hands on him, put out his eyes, and carried him off to Gaza, where they threw two brazen chains upon him, and made him grind in the mill.

Meanwhile his hair began to grow again. After a time the Philistine princes assembled to hold a great sacrifice and feast in honor of their god Dagon. "Our god has put Samson,

[1] After an amended version.

our enemy, into our power," they shouted in triumph; and when the people saw him they took up the cry and praised the god who had broken the strength of the warrior who had laid waste their land and destroyed their countrymen. "Come!" they cried in glee; "Samson shall show us some tumbling!" Samson submitted, and was placed between the two chief pillars of the temple by which the whole block was supported. Then he asked the boy who led him to allow him to lean against these pillars for a moment. The whole place was crowded with people, including all the princes of the land. On the roof alone three thousand men and women were assembled, and all were intent on Samson's feats. Leaning upon the pillars, he prayed to Yahweh, "O Lord! look upon me, and give me back my former strength this once, that I may avenge myself on the Philistines for the loss of my eyes." With this prayer in his heart, he embraced the two pillars upon which the building rested, one with his right arm and the other with his left, and bowing himself together with all his strength, he cried, "Let me die with the Philistines!" The temple fell in with a crash, and crushed all who were within it. So Samson's death brought heavier losses on the Philistines than all the exploits of his life had done. Then his relatives came and buried him in the grave of his father Manoah, between Zorah and Eshtaol. He had judged Israel twenty years.

The myth that lies at the foundation of this story is a description of the sun's course during the six winter months. The god is gradually encompassed by his enemies, mist and darkness. At first he easily maintains his freedom, and gives glorious proofs of his strength; but the fetters grow stronger and stronger, until at last he is robbed of his crown of rays, and loses all his power and glory. Such is the sun in winter. But he has not lost his splendor for ever. Gradually his strength returns, at last he reappears; and though he still seems to allow himself to be mocked, yet the power of avenging himself has returned, and in the end he triumphs over his enemies once more. This final victory is represented by the scene in the temple of Dagon. But here the ancient myth appears to have been superseded to a great extent by the conceptions of the narrator, who has recast it. It is he who makes Samson the Philistine-slayer, and represents him as praying to Yahweh, while his enemies call upon Dagon. The death of the sun-god, and his burial at the very place from which he began his course are features common to all solar

myths. They are explained by the belief that the sun lived and ruled for one year, after which he descended to the nether world and was succeeded by the next year's sun.

How strange is the world of ideas and feelings to which such a myth transports us! The ancients saw the lurid thunder clouds, from which the lightning darted, and perhaps wrapped the corn or the olive gardens in flames; and not content with comparing these clouds to jackals, with flaming torches hanging between their tails, they went on to consider what it could be that caused the sun-god's wrath. They could only attribute it to the fact that when he had reached the highest point of his course in the heavens he had to descend again. Genuine scientific observation was thus grafted upon a childlike form of religion and a poetical view of Nature.

This world of solar myths is gone. In fact, it had already lost half its reality when priests, who knew something of science, brought the popular myths into connection with what they knew of astronomy, and worked them up into these elaborate forms. Gradually even the most uneducated lost all sympathy with them. Observation and reflection banished them. The posterity of those who invented the solar myths could no longer understand them. They had no longer any sympathy with the struggling and dying sun-god. On the other hand, they did feel an interest in struggling men — in heroes who slew their enemies and laid waste their lands. The beaming sun-god, who hurled the lightning, became the savage warrior, Samson, the slayer of the Philistines, whose strength lay in his hair.

This marks a certain progress, for man is a nobler creature than anything else the world can show, and the passions of man belong to a higher order of things than the raging of the powers of Nature; yet those who first recast these ancient myths had but a low ideal of heroic life themselves. There is nothing noble in the Samson of their legends. They are content to make him rude, vengeful, and unjust; and he dies with a prayer for vengeance on his lips because he had lost his eyes. His only title to admiration is that he was physically strong, and that he slew the enemies of Israel. Just as a bold and successful hunter was exalted above all men, and honored as "a hunter before Yahweh's face"[1] in a land swarming with beasts of prey, so when Israel was struggling for life and death to hold its own against its foes, a hero who gained victories

[1] See pp. 85, 86.

over them was hailed as a messenger of Yahweh, without much reference to his moral character.

Somewhat higher ground was taken by the writer who fitted the legend of Samson, almost without alteration, into the series of stories about the judges, and made the savage slayer of the Philistines into one of Israel's rulers. He represented Israel's misfortunes as the result of sin, and gave the deliverer at least the name of a judge — though he never makes him act as one; and this alone is enough to show that he could appreciate something more than unbridled violence and unconquerable strength, that he attached some importance to moral qualities.

It has sometimes been lamented that the age of myths is gone, that we can no longer picture Nature instinct with life, as she appeared to the ancients. For us, it is said, she has ceased to be divine. It is but an idle complaint. There is a fairer world than that of material nature. There is a far more fascinating spectacle than the thunder-storm and the succession of the seasons. The human heart reveals a fairer world, and the strife of human passions a scene of grander interest. In the days of the ancient myths men had no eyes for these nobler things; it was only later that they learned to understand them. We see God now less in the sun and moon, in the thunder-storm and hurricane, or the changing seasons of the year, than in all that is pure and virtuous in the human breast, in the triumph of good over evil, of duty over inclination. Surely this latter faith bears richer fruit in our lives and brings us sweeter comfort in our sorrows.

Chapter XXI.

RUTH THE MOABITESS.

The Book of Ruth.

THIS book, which appears in our Bibles as a sort of appendix to the book of Judges, is really an independent work by a different author. It was certainly written long after the period of the judges, into which it transports us, nay even after the Babylonian captivity, and as late as in the time of Ezra. The writer's main object is evident enough. He wishes

to tell us something of David's ancestry, and obviously intends to show honor to the family to which he belonged, rather than to bring it into contempt. We shall speak of the circumstances that gave occasion to his work, when we treat of the times in which it was written. As we have no knowledge of the sources from which the writer drew his materials, we cannot tell how far the particulars of what he relates are historical; but the main fact that David was partly of Moabite extraction is indirectly confirmed elsewhere,[1] and is most likely true. But whatever may be its historical value, the picture sketched in the book of Ruth contrasts sweetly with all the rude scenes of bloodshed and violence which fill the writings that treat of the ancient history of Israel. It shows us that the eyes of the Israelites were open to the gentler virtues of domestic life, and to the beauty of pure affection. The manners to which this work introduces us are pure; and even where our sense of propriety is startled by a touch which jars against our customary notions, yet the laws of morality are never disregarded.

We must begin with a special explanation of a certain custom of the ancient Israelites; for without a knowledge of it the story cannot be understood. It is the so-called *levirate marriage*, or "marriage with a brother-in-law,"[2] and the redemption of deceased relatives' former property, which appears to have been connected with it. It is true that we cannot explain all the allusions in the story of Ruth which hinge upon this custom, but certain indications contained in other Israelite writings give us at least some light.

A law dating from about the time of the Babylonian captivity,[3] enjoins the levirate marriage in the following words: "When two brothers live together and one of them dies without a son, leaving a widow behind him, she must not marry a stranger, but must become the wife of her brother-in-law. Should this marriage be blessed with children, then the eldest of them is to be considered the son of the first husband, so that his name may not perish. Should the brother be unwilling to perform his duty, then the widow may complain to the elders of the place, and if, in their presence, he still persist in his refusal, she must draw off his shoe and spit in his face, with the words of infamy, 'Thus be it done to the man who refuses to preserve his brother's family.' And ever after his house shall

[1] 1 Samuel xxii. 3, 4. [2] From the Latin *levir*, "a brother-in-law."
[3] Deuteronomy xxv. 5–10.

bear the nick-name 'House of the bare-foot.'" To understand these regulations we must remember that the Israelite laws almost always differed widely from those of modern peoples, in not defining with any accuracy the matters of which they treated, or even attempting to provide for all possible cases. Thus the law we have just quoted admits of many different interpretations, and leaves a host of questions unanswered. For instance, what are we to understand by "living together"? Does it mean in the "same house," or, "with their lands adjoining"? Might the widow refuse to marry her brother-in-law? It is assumed that the latter was unmarried, for it was only the first child, or the first son, that was to be considered the offspring of the former marriage and the first husband's heir, while the woman's other children were to belong to her second husband. But suppose the surviving brother had a wife and children already? Must he take the widow as well? Or might he then decline to do so? If so, did the duty pass on to a younger brother? We could add many more questions of the same kind, none of which are answered in the text. Like most other Israelite laws, it was more a description of what the writer thought desirable in certain cases than a regular ordinance by the letter of which the judges were bound. It points to a usage of the Israelites that was sustained not so much by written laws as by the power of public opinion and the perception of what was desirable and right. It was, therefore, more carefully observed in some places than in others. The custom rested on the belief that it was not only a misfortune but a disgrace to die without children. One of the most awful threats conceivable was that a man's name should be rooted out. Thus if a malefactor was executed it was felt as a terrible aggravation of his punishment to kill his children too. So if any one died childless, it was considered the duty of his brothers, and after them of his other near relatives, to prevent his widow from marrying into another house, and to continue the family of their lost relative if they possibly could; and the very common practice of polygamy made it comparatively easy to do so. The law of which we have just spoken deals with an obvious case, that of an unmarried brother living in the same house as the deceased; but no doubt some were more conscientious than others in this matter, as the book of Ruth itself will show us.

In the little city of Bethlehem, in Judah, there lived, in

the time of the judges, the family of Elimelech, whose wife, Naomi, had presented him with two sons, Mahlon and Chilion. Things went so badly with him that, when the land was visited with famine, he could no longer gain bread for his family in Bethlehem. So he removed to the land of the Moabites, where, soon afterwards, he died. His widow went on living there with her two sons, and, in the course of time, they both of them married wives belonging to the country. One was called Orpah, and the other Ruth. So Naomi had almost become a Moabitess, and yet her heart still clung to her fatherland. When she had been ten years in Moab, she lost her two sons, and was left alone with her daughters-in-law, both of whom were childless. Now, when she heard that Yahweh had remembered his people once more, and had given them bread, she so longed for her old home that, before long, she and her daughters started on their way for Judah.

Alas for Naomi! How sadly she left the land in which she had sojourned as a stranger! What treasures she had buried there! And yet she had one great comfort left in her children-in-law. Not only had she witnessed the happiness which they had both of them given to her sons, during their married life, but they had shown themselves full of affection for her, the afflicted mother, after the death of their husbands. They were like her own daughters to her. But now the question rose in her breast, whether she had any right to take selfish advantage of their love? Had she any right to take them with her into a foreign land? What would become of them, young as they were, when she was dead? Thinking over all this, as she went on her way, she turned at last to her daughters-in-law, and said, "Turn back, each of you to her mother's home! May Yahweh reward you for the goodness you have shown the dead and me! May he bless you with happy marriages once more!" So saying, she gave them her parting kiss, and burst into tears. It cost her a hard struggle to part from the widows of her sons, whom she, too, loved so tenderly. How lonely she would be when they were gone! And Orpah and Ruth, on their side, loved her so dearly that they could not bear to let her go alone. It was not easy to bid their homes farewell, and go to wander through a foreign land, and to serve other gods. By doing so they would give up, with so much else, all hope of second marriages. For who would wed a poor stranger in Judah? An uncertain future, full of danger, awaited them. But yet they could not desert the mother of their husbands. They fell, weeping, upon

her neck, and cried, "We will go with you to your fatherland!"

But the generous contest still went on, for Naomi persisted. "No, my children," she said; "turn back again! Why should you go with me? I have no sons to be your husbands. And even were it possible that sons might still be born to me, would you wait for them and refrain for their sakes from enjoying the blessings of a married life at once? No, my daughters, it must not be. Join not your lot to mine; I am more heavily afflicted than you are, for Yahweh's hand is against me."[1] At last Orpah yielded to the representations of her mother-in-law. She reluctantly took leave of her and returned.

But Ruth persisted in her determination to accompany her mother-in-law. Naomi appealed in vain to the example of Orpah, and again reminded her that she was bidding farewell to her country and her religion. Ruth never swerved from her resolve, and at last solemnly adjured her: "Entreat me not to leave you or to return to my own people; for where you go, there will I go with you; where the night finds you, there will I be also; your people is my people; your god my god; where you die there will I die, and there be buried. Nought but death shall part us. I swear it by Yahweh, and may he punish me if I break my oath!" This put an end to all further opposition.

So the mother and daughter-in-law pursued their journey till they came to Bethlehem, where Naomi's arrival created no little interest, for she was still well remembered there. "Is that Naomi?" they asked, rejoicing in her return, and pitying her depressed appearance. "Alas!" she answered, in sadness of heart, "call me not Naomi (or *loveliness*). But call me Mara (or *bitterness*), for the Mighty One has made my lot bitter. Rich in a husband and two sons I went out, and Yahweh has brought me back bereft of all. I am no longer Naomi. For Yahweh has bowed me down; the Mighty One has afflicted me."

So Naomi was once more in her native place. But what was she to do? Beg assistance from her relatives? Alas! poverty makes those who are unaccustomed to it so timid and abashed, and there were so many people asking help! And yet something must be done. Luckily for her she found a true support in Ruth. It was love of her mother-in-law that had brought her to Bethlehem, and now she would toil to support

[1] After an amended version.

her. No work was too humble or too hard for her. She was ready for anything that came to hand. It was just the time of barley harvest when she came to Bethlehem with her mother-in-law, why should not she go and glean after the reapers? True enough the bread she earned in this way would be hardly won and scanty. It was weary work to spend the whole day in the open field, under a burning sun, parched with thirst and constantly stooping, following at a distance the reapers and the girls that bound up the sheaves, and all for a few scattered ears that had been left unbound and would therefore have been lost. And then a poor solitary woman is so little thought of, and cannot reckon upon gentle treatment. Many of the owners would not have the poor gleaners on their fields, and the laborers were sometimes very rough to them. No doubt they often brought it upon themselves by annoying the reapers and binders, and the temptation was great to come a few steps nearer the sheaves than was allowed; it was such slow work to pick the corn up ear by ear, the sheaves were close by, and a few handfuls plucked from them brought more than a whole day's toil. It was with timid steps that Ruth approached the field; but her love for her mother-in-law gave her strength.

She could not have wished for better fortune. The field to which she went happened to belong to a rich relation of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. Ruth was not aware of this. It was quite by accident that she went to this particular field early in the morning. She asked the reapers' leave to glean, and they recognized the Moabitess and gave her permission. Then she gave herself no rest, but gained the admiration of the reapers by her patient diligence. Before the day was half gone, when every one was in full work, the owner came to see how things were going on. "Yahweh be with you!" said he, as he greeted his people; and they answered, "Yahweh bless you!" As Boaz was looking round to see what his laborers had done and what was still left to do, his eye fell upon Ruth. He felt interested in the young woman, for she was so busily employed, kept such a modest distance, and looked so respectable. He asked his bailiff who she was, and he was able to inform him. "Why," said he, "it is Ruth, the Moabitess, who came here with Naomi, out of Moab. She asked leave to glean in the field, and has been working all day long. She will not be at home much to-day, I fancy!"[1]

Boaz had heard of her self-sacrifice, and greatly admired

[1] After an amended version.

her faithful affection; so he went up to speak to her. "Listen, my child," he said, in a friendly and encouraging voice, "be sure you go to no other fields to glean, but keep to my land, and stay near my work-women. I have told my people not to annoy you in any way. When you are thirsty go to the pitchers, and drink the water that my servants have drawn." Addressed so kindly by a citizen, whose wealth and years gave him such dignity, the Moabitess made a deep obeisance. "Sir," she answered, "I am but a stranger. How comes it that you show me such kindness?" "Because," said Boaz, warmly, "I have heard of all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband; how you have left your parents and the land of your birth, and have come to a people you do not know. May Yahweh reward you! May he, the god of Israel, under whose wings you have come to dwell, reward you as you have deserved!" Abashed at his praise, and delighted to have a friend in the foreign land so soon, Ruth bowed again, and stammered: "I am glad I have found grace in your eyes, for you comfort me, and your words have done me good; your kindness is too great, for I am less than one of your servants!"

Encouraged by this interview, Ruth went on industriously gleaning. When it was time for the reapers to rest a little, and take their mid-day meal, Boaz sent for her, and, to her great surprise, invited her to join them. She gladly made use of his permission, and lay down to eat with the others. Boaz did not dole out a pittance to her, as in charity, but treated her as one of his own servants; nay, even more bountifully than that, for she was not only able to satisfy herself with toasted barley-bread soaked in vinegar, but had some to spare for Naomi. What laborer there would grudge it her! And when she had left the work-people, to begin her work again, they were all glad to hear Boaz say, "Let her come right in amongst the sheaves, without disturbing her. She can be trusted. And you, girls! when she is behind you, quietly drop a handful of ears now and then. She must find good gleaning here. Do you understand?"

No wonder then that in the evening, when she had thrashed out her gleanings on the field, she found she had an *ephah* of barley. Though Boaz had given his orders to the reaping party in private, yet Ruth understood well enough that she had intentional kindness to thank for the large amount she had gleaned. So she went home in high spirits and showed her mother-in-law how much she had collected and what she

had over from her mid-day meal. "Why, child!" cried Naomi in astonishment, "where have you been gleaning? A blessing on the man who has showed you this kindness!" Then Ruth told her everything that had happened, and said that the man upon whose field she had been at work was called Boaz. On hearing this Naomi exclaimed in delight: "May Yahweh, the god who shows favor to the dead and to the living, bless him! Listen, my child, for it could not have fallen out better. This Boaz is our relative, and, therefore one of our redeemers." "And he told me," continued Ruth who was never tired of repeating her generous patron's praises "that I was to keep with his people all through the harvest." "That is good news!" answered her delighted mother-in-law. "Be sure you do so, for you might meet with a very different reception in some other field!"

Ruth obeyed, and kept with the harvest-women of Boaz throughout the barley harvest and the wheat harvest that followed it, living all the time with her mother-in-law. Now when the harvest-time was over, Naomi said to Ruth: "My child! How can I long for anything more than for your welfare? I am ever thinking of it. And now I have made a plan and will tell you what it is. This Boaz, with whose servants you are working, is, as I have told you, one of our relatives. And I think you ought to take courage to remind him of this. Perhaps he will redeem my dead husband's inheritance and marry you. I will tell you what to do. This evening the barley will be thrashed. Bathe and anoint yourself, and put on your best attire, and when it is evening go to the thrashing-floor, but do not let Boaz see you until he has finished his meal and is sure to be in a good humor. Then go up to him and make your request, and he will tell you what to do." Ruth did as she was told, and the well-laid scheme produced the desired effect. Boaz was not in the least offended at being reminded of his duty to look after his poor relations, but commended Ruth for desiring him, advanced as he was in years, as her husband. He was quite prepared to restore the family to their former position, but did not feel at liberty to do so until he had spoken to one of his fellow-citizens who was still more nearly related to Elimelech than he was himself. But he promised Ruth to go through with the matter as quickly as possible. Meanwhile she must not be anxious; every one in the city knew her virtue. If this other relative did not wish to marry her, then — as sure as Yahweh lived! — he would marry her himself. Early in the morning Ruth came back to Naomi with six meas-

ures of barley which Boaz had given her. Her mother-in-law was anxiously waiting for her, and cried as soon as she drew near, "How have you prospered?" The kind reception that Ruth had met and the present she brought with her convinced Naomi that all was going on well, and with good hopes for the future, she advised her daughter-in-law to wait in patience, and not to go to work in the fields again for the present. This Boaz was evidently a man who would not rest until he had carried the affair to a successful issue.

She was right in her estimate of him; for that very day he went to the open space in front of the gate, which was the regular place for the citizens to meet each other, and transact their business in. One was almost sure to find any one he wished to speak to there. So Boaz went and sat there till he saw the man, of whom he had spoken to Ruth, approaching. Then he called him, and giving him to understand that he had some business of importance with him, summoned ten other citizens as witnesses. When this was done, he laid the matter in hand before him thus: "The land that formerly belonged to our relative, Elimelech, must be redeemed; and I thought it would be best for you and me to talk the matter over, since the duty rests upon us alone; upon you first, and then upon me. What do you say to it?" The other was not unwilling to do his duty in redeeming the land; but when Boaz reminded him that if he did so, he must also marry Ruth, the Moabitess, so as to continue the family of Elimelech, he drew back, and gladly surrendered his rights to Boaz, drawing off his shoe and handing it to him in confirmation of the transaction. This was formerly the custom in Israel, when a sale or redemption was effected. It had the same meaning as a shake of the hand among us. Then Boaz said to the elders, in the hearing of all present, "Bear witness that I redeem Elimelech's land this day, and take Mahlon's widow, Ruth, as my wife, that her eldest son may be counted Mahlon's, and that his name may not perish from our city. You are my witnesses." Upon which the elders, and all others who were present answered, "We have heard. May Yahweh make this your wife, as Rachel and as Leah, who built up the whole house of Israel! Soon may your family in Bethlehem be great!"

The marriage was not long delayed; and when Ruth gave birth to a son the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be Yahweh, who has caused a true redeemer to be born for you

this day! May his name be famous in Israel; may he grow up to be the comfort and support of your old age; for your daughter-in-law has given him birth — she that is better than seven sons to you!" Then Naomi took the child and laid it on her bosom and became its nurse. So the neighbors said, "Naomi has got a son!"

That child was Obed, the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Surely such a pious and affectionate daughter-in-law was worthy of being King David's ancestress, even though she was a Moabitess by birth.

Chapter XXII.

THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF SAMUEL.

1 Samuel I.–IV.

WE are gradually drawing near the end of the period of the judges, and passing on to that of the kings. On the border line, between the two, stands the imposing form of Samuel, upon whose history we are now to enter. This history, together with that of Saul and David, is contained in the two books called after Samuel himself. The Greek and the old Latin translations called them the first and second books of Kings, while the two books that go by these names with us were called the third and fourth of Kings. These are the names still used in the translation adopted by the Roman Catholic Church, the *Vulgate*, and are preserved as second titles in our own "authorized version."

The degree of reliance to be placed on the different sections of books of Samuel varies greatly. There is no book in the Bible which shows so clearly that its contents are not all derived from the same source. Some of the elements of these books are ancient traditions, which not only give us a fairly accurate account of real events, but faithfully reproduce the religious ideas of ancient Israel. Others, on the contrary, are simply inventions, which teach us more about the narrators' views and opinions than about the past history of their people. As long as we have to follow the books of Samuel as our chief authorities, we shall meet with the same evidence of composite authorship with

which the examination of the book of Genesis has made us familiar. Two conflicting traditions relating to the same subject are constantly placed side by side in perfect simplicity, and apparently with no idea that the one contradicts the other. But though all this is rather vexatious, yet it has its advantages, for it shows us the ideas entertained by the Israelites at several different periods.

And again, as long as we are busy with the books of Samuel, the notes to indicate that my translation differs from that of the authorized version will be especially frequent. This is not caused by the carelessness of the scholars who translated these books, but by the condition in which the original Hebrew itself has come down to us. In hundreds of places in the Bible the transcribers of the Hebrew manuscripts have been guilty of the grossest blunders, and it is often utterly impossible to make any sense of what they have written. Sometimes, too, the old Jewish scholars have purposely altered the text.[1] So that even with the help of the old translations which have now and then followed an uncorrupted text, it is often exceedingly difficult, and not unfrequently impossible, to make out how the text really stood originally. In some books, however, the text has come down to us in a much better condition than in others; but in no historical book of the Old Testament is the text so "corrupt," as it is called, as in the books of Samuel. In some cases not only letters and words, but whole verses have fallen out.

We may now examine the contents of the opening chapters.

North of Bethel, and east of the road that leads from thence to Shechem, lies the city of Shiloh.[2] Here the ark of Yahweh was placed after the conquest of Canaan, and the sanctuary in which it stood was, as a natural consequence, honored and sought above all others. Towards the end of the period of the judges, a chief priest of the name of Eli, with his sons Hophni and Phinehas, presided over this temple of Yahweh of Armies.

At the great spring festival the concourse of pilgrims was especially large; and amongst those who regularly attended it was a certain man of Ramathaim or Ramah. His name was Elkanah, and he belonged to the clan of the Zuphites, of the tribe of Ephraim. He had two wives, one of whom, Hannah, was childless, while the other, Peninnah, had borne him several sons and daughters. Now, when Elkanah came

[1] See p. 392. [2] Judges xxi. 19.

with all his household to join in celebrating the feast and presented his thank-offering to Yahweh, he used to give each member of his family a piece of meat, with the wine and all else that belonged to it, at the sacrificial meal. So Peninnah received the greater part for herself and her children, while Hannah, who was quite alone, received but one piece;[1] and though her husband evidently loved her better than he did her rival, yet she could not be consoled for her childlessness. How she envied Peninnah, who could come year after year to the sacrificial meal proudly surrounded by her children, while she must still remain alone! It embittered all her enjoyment of the festal journey. More than once she was unable even to join in the sacrificial meal, and sat there eating nothing.[1] In vain did Elkanah endeavor to comfort her by whispering affectionately, "Why, Hannah, what good can come of weeping and fasting in this way? It will only make you still more wretched. And is not my love worth more than ten sons to you?" It was all in vain. Her sorrow was too great for her to bear.

On one occasion Hannah could hardly restrain herself till the meal was done, and as soon as it was over she retired into solitude. With a sad heart she stood in the open space before the sanctuary, wrung her hands, and gave free vent to her sorrow as she sobbed her prayer to Yahweh. "O Yahweh of Armies!" she said to herself, "do but look down upon the misery of thy handmaid; remember me in mercy, and pass me not by without a blessing! If thou givest me a son, then I will consecrate him to thee; he shall be a servant in this temple, and a Nazarite all his life."

Now Eli, the chief priest, was sitting in his chair at the door-post of the temple, and the passionate gestures by which Hannah gave expression to her grief as she was uttering her vow attracted his attention. Seeing her lips moving rapidly, though he could hear no sound, he thought she must be drunk. Such a thing was by no means unusual on occasion of a sacrificial feast; for when the worshippers were "making themselves glad before Yahweh's face," as it was called,[2] the merriment was sometimes carried far. But to such a man as Eli it was a scandal for a woman to be drunk at the sanctuary. "How long must this last?" he cried to Hannah. "Go away and sleep till you are sober!" Thus rudely interrupted in her prayer, she answered: "Alas! sir, I am sad

[1] After an amended version.
[2] Deuteronomy, xii. 7, 12, 18, xiv. 26, &c.

at heart. I have drunk no wine or strong drink, but was pouring out my heart before Yahweh. Think not that I am a daughter of Belial (that is, a good-for-nothing creature); for I did but speak from the depth of my sorrows." Then Eli said: "Go in peace then, and Israel's god shall give you what you have desired;" to which Hannah courteously replied, as she took her leave, "May I hold a place in your gracious memory!" That prayer, followed at once by the promise which seemed to come like an oracle of God from the lips of the priest, comforted her so much that she was able to join once more in the family meals, and to put on a more cheerful appearance. Early the next morning Elkanah and his family visited the sanctuary again, and after praying to Yahweh there they returned to Ramah.

Twelve months afterwards Elkanah came again to offer his yearly sacrifice, to fulfil his vows, and to pay his tithes; but this time Hannah was not with him. She remained at home unutterably blessed in the possession of a son who had been born to her a short time before, and whom she had called Samuel, that is, "the prayed for." She would not go up till she could take him with her and leave him at the sanctuary, and he was still too young to dispense with a mother's care. "As soon as I have weaned my child," she said, when urged by her husband to accompany him, "I will take him to Shiloh and present him to Yahweh, that he may remain in the sanctuary all his life." Elkanah acquiesced in her desire, however strange it appeared to him, and said: "Do what you think best. Stay at home till you have weaned him. Only fulfil your vow to Yahweh." [1]

So when the child was old enough to be parted from his mother, though still quite young, Hannah brought him up to Shiloh, with an ox three years old,[1] an *ephah* of meal, and a skin of wine, all of which she offered as a sacrifice. Then she took the boy to Eli, and said, "As surely as thou livest, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying to Yahweh, a few years ago. I was begging for this child, and Yahweh answered my prayer. Now I am come to give back to my god what he has given me."

Then Hannah broke out into a song of gratitude and joy:

My heart leaps for joy at the goodness of Yahweh,
I lift up my head in his strength,
I am bold to rebuke my enemies,
I rejoice in the victory that thou hast given me.
None is holy as Yahweh, nor righteous as he; [1]

[1] After an amended version.

There is no rock so mighty as our god.
Speak not, speak not proudly,
Let no haughty words proceed out of your mouth!
For Yahweh is a god of marvellous knowledge;
Evil deeds cannot stand before him,[1]
The bow of the mighty is broken,
But they that stumbled are girded with strength;
Those that were satisfied with bread must now hire themselves to labor,
And the hungry need no longer till their own land;[1]
A childless woman has seven sons,
While she that had many children pines;
Yahweh kills, and he makes alive,
He casts down, and brings back from the world below.
It is Yahweh that makes men poor or rich,
He humbles and he exalts:
He lifts up the lowly out of the dust,
And raises the poor from the mire.
He gives him a place among princes,
And sets him upon a seat of honor;
For Yahweh established the pillars of the earth,
And set the firm land upon them.
He guards the footsteps of those he loves,
But the godless are struck dumb, and are lost in darkness;
For violence wins not the victory.
Those that fight against Yahweh are smitten with terror,
He thunders from heaven upon them;
Yahweh rules over all the earth,
He gives might to his king,
And exalts the horn of his anointed.

When she had sung these words and prayed to Yahweh, Hannah returned with her husband to Ramah, leaving her child behind her under Eli's care.

So Samuel became a servant of the temple, and was constantly employed in work connected with the worship there. But yet his surroundings were but ill-calculated to make him a true and earnest man, for there was little of the spirit of religion in those about him. The sons of Eli had no fear of Yahweh, and they even laid their sacrilegious hands upon that which was dedicated to Yahweh. They had abundant opportunities of doing so; for when any one brought a beast to sacrifice to Yahweh, only a small part of it, generally the fat, was actually burned upon the altar, while the rest served as a meal for those who made the sacrifice. Now while the meat was being boiled, the servant of the priests was allowed to come with a fork and take out a piece of flesh from the pot. This was the priest's due, which he could fairly claim in payment for his services. But Eli's sons sent their servant to claim the priest's portion before the fat had been burned, and demanded that it should

[1] After an amended version.

be given them raw instead of boiled. And if the sacrificer objected on the ground that until the offering had been made the whole beast belonged to Yahweh, the servant of the priests went on to threaten violence. Thus did Hophni and Phinehas commit the grievous sin of treating the sacrifice of Yahweh with contempt.

Such were the surroundings amongst which Samuel received his priestly training. But the piety of his mother must have counteracted these bad influences to some extent. Her heart still clung to Samuel; and every year, at the spring feast, when Elkanah came with his family to Shiloh to offer his sacrifice, she brought a new coat for her son with her. The first time they came in this way Eli pronounced a blessing on Elkanah and his wife, and said, "May Yahweh give you children by this woman, in the place of him whom you have given to the sanctuary."[1] This blessing of the priest turned out to be an oracle of God, for Hannah became the joyful mother of three more sons and two daughters, while Samuel still remained in Yahweh's temple.

Eli's kind words to Elkanah are what we should expect from a good-hearted old man. And good-hearted Eli certainly was, but, unfortunately, he was what is sometimes very wrongly called "a good sort of fellow:" that is to say he was weak and yielding. This appears from his conduct towards his sons. It was unquestionably his duty as chief priest to maintain the sanctity of the offerings, with a strong hand if necessary, and he ought to have made his sons feel his paternal authority. He should have treated them with severity, not only for their own sakes, but still more for the sake of the people, for the conduct of the priests was undermining all their reverence for Yahweh and his worship. He ought to have punished, suspended, or deposed all who were guilty of such sacrilege, and he would certainly have done so had he honored God more than his own sons. But he never thought of deposing them. When he was told of their doings he did indeed reprove them, but in terms that were far too gentle. "Why," he said, "do you behave so evilly as I am told you do? Nay, my sons, these are ill reports that I hear of you. It is Yahweh against whom you sin.[1] If any one sins against a man, then the deity may come between the two, and show how they may be reconciled; but if a man sins against Yahweh, who shall deliver the offender?" This exhortation, however just, had no effect, for Hophni and Phinehas gave no heed to

[1] After an amended version.

their father's words. It was clear that Yahweh had determined to destroy them, and was now blinding their eyes, that they might themselves rush upon their miserable fate. What a contrast to the young Samuel, who was growing up in the enjoyment of high esteem among his fellow-men, and with his God!

Eli was not left unwarned, for a man of God came to him and uttered this terrible rebuke: "I revealed myself," says Yahweh, "to your ancestors in the land of Egypt, and I chose them and their sons to be my priests, to offer sacrifices before me, to burn incense, and to bear the ephod.[1] Thus have I given you the dues of all the offerings of the sons of Israel. Why then do you cast a jealous eye upon the portion of the sacrifices which falls to me,[2] honoring your sons more than you honor me, and enriching yourself with the first fruits of all the gifts of the Israelites? Verily," says Yahweh, "though I have indeed promised the priesthood to your family for ever, yet now will I break the vow, for I honor those that honor me, but those that reject me are cursed. And lo! the time draws near when I will root out you and yours, and none shall attain to old age, and you shall look with envious eyes upon Israel's prosperity.[2] And when you see that my altar never lacks a priest while all your descendants die before their time, you will be filled with grief. In token of the truth of this prophecy, I tell you that both your sons shall die on the same day. But I will raise up a faithful priest, after my own heart; I will bless his house, and he shall serve me in my sanctuary all his days, before the face of my anointed. Then the remnant of your house shall come and bow down to the dust before him and cry, 'Oh! give us in mercy some priestly office to support our lives.'"

Nor was Yahweh satisfied with warning Eli once, for he chose the youthful Samuel to bear a second message. In those days the spirit of religion languished, and no one ever saw a vision. But one night when Eli, now blind and feeble from extreme old age, lay on his bed in the sanctuary where the ark of Yahweh stood, early in the morning, before the lights in the temple were lit,[2] Yahweh called to Samuel, who was sleeping near, by his name. "I am here!" answered the boy, getting up and going to Eli to ask him why he had called him. Eli declared that he had not called him, and told him to go to sleep again. But Samuel soon heard Yahweh's voice again, and the whole scene was repeated without his

[1] See p. 375.

[2] After an amended version.

suspecting who it was that called him. But when he heard the voice, and came to Eli a third time, the old man saw that Yahweh was about to make some revelation to the boy. So he said, "Samuel, if you hear the voice again, then say, 'Speak, Yahweh! thy servant heareth.'" A few moments afterwards Yahweh came into the chamber, approached the sleeping boy, and cried as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" He answered reverently that he was ready to listen: and Yahweh said, "Behold, I shall soon do that in Israel at which the ears of every one who hears it will tingle. All that I have foretold to Eli concerning himself and his house I shall bring to pass full soon; for I have warned him that he and his remotest posterity shall be punished for the sin of his sons. He himself shares their guilt, for he did not depose them[1] when they treated the deity with contempt. Wherefore I have sworn an oath, that no sacrifice shall ever atone for the sin of Eli's house." After receiving this terrible message, Samuel lay quiet until it was time for him to get up and open the temple doors. He naturally shrank from telling Eli what he had heard; but when the old man not only questioned him about it, but conjured him to hide nothing that Yahweh had said to him, at last he delivered the fearful message. "Let Yahweh do what seems him good," answered the poor old man, more in apathy than resignation.

This was not the only revelation that was made to Samuel. It was well known that he enjoyed the favor of Yahweh. He often appeared to him in Shiloh, enabled him to foresee the future, and allowed none of his prophecies to remain unfulfilled. And thus the report was gradually spread through all the land of Israel, that Samuel was a prophet of Yahweh, or, as people called it then, a "seer."

Meanwhile, Yahweh's threat against Hophni and Phinehas hastened to its fulfilment. In those days, the Israelites and the Philistines were constantly at war, and it so happened that the former suffered a defeat, in which four thousand warriors fell, at Ephek, in the north-west of Judah. By no means disheartened, but burning with shame at their humiliation, and longing for revenge, the Israelites returned to their camp. The leaders held a council of war at once, and discussed the question, "Why did not Yahweh help us in the battle with the Philistines to-day? Why did he suffer us to be defeated?" No one could give a satisfactory answer; but one thing was certain, — namely, that the battle must be renewed, and that

[1] After an amended version.

Yahweh must be induced to lend more powerful aid. But how were they to compel him to do so? The ark must be brought from Shiloh; for then Yahweh would be with them, and would secure them the victory. The suggestion was carried out at once. The ark was brought; and, when the two priests, Hophni and Phinehas, came to the camp with it, the Israelites raised such a mighty shout of triumph, that the earth shook with their cry. Now they were sure of victory!

When the Philistines learned what had happened, and heard why the Israelites were so triumphant, they could not escape a certain sense of fear, for they, too, thought that these gods of the Hebrews were very mighty. But they did not lose their courage. "Be brave," they cried to one another, "and quit yourselves like men, O Philistines! or else you will become the slaves of the Hebrews just as they have been your slaves hitherto. Be men!" They did indeed fight bravely, and now the Israelites learned that the presence of the ark alone did not make them invincible, for they were not only defeated, but completely scattered. They lost three thousand men. The ark of God itself fell into the hands of the enemy, and Hophni and Phinehas, the priests who bore it, were slain in the battle.

The sad news was brought to Shiloh by a Benjamite. With his clothes rent and with ashes on his head, the fugitive entered the city, and cries of woe soon rose on every side. The blind Eli, now ninety-eight years of age, sat at the city gate in anxious expectation, thinking of the fate of the ark. He soon perceived that something unusual was going on, and sent for the messenger. "I have come from the camp. I have escaped," he answered hesitatingly to the old man's pressing questions. "Speak out," repeated Eli, "and tell me how things stand." Alas! he was prepared for evil tidings, but when he heard the whole truth it completely overwhelmed him: "Israel is defeated — the loss of life is heavy — both your sons are slain — and . . . the ark of God is in the hands of the Philistines!" That last word — "the ark is lost!" — was too much for the faithful servant of the sanctuary of Yahweh. He fell backwards from his seat and — was gone. He had ruled Israel as a judge for forty years.

On this same day of sorrow Eli's daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, brought a child into the world whose birth was hastened by the shock of the ill-news, and cost his mother her life. When she heard that she had given birth to a son, she thought of the great blow which had fallen that day upon Israel,

and her pale lips murmured: "Call him Ichabod (or, *where is the glory?*), for Israel's glory is in the power of the foe."

We must now make a few remarks upon certain points in the narrative just given, and in the first place upon Samuel's extraction.

The story begins by a perfectly distinct statement that Samuel's father was a Zuphite of the tribe of Ephraim. On the other hand the writer of the book of Chronicles gives us two pedigrees, according to which he was a Kohathite of the tribe of Levi.[1] These two accounts of his origin cannot both be true. It was no more possible for Samuel to be both a Levite and an Ephraimite by descent than for the Levite Jonathan, of whom we have already heard,[2] to belong to the tribe of Judah. These passages in the book of Chronicles, written about three centuries before Christ, show us how little harm people saw, at that time, in inventing genealogies. Indeed the same practice was still common at a much later date.[3] It is easy to understand what it was that impelled the chronicler to make out by hook or by crook that Samuel was a Levite. The son of Elkanah had been a servant of the temple, and had more than once offered sacrifices and performed other priestly functions.[4] In the eyes of the writer of the Chronicles this was scandalous to the last degree, for in his time none but sons of Aaron were permitted to officiate as priests, and only Levites might assist them in the service of the temple. He was not aware that these regulations were of comparatively recent origin, but imagined that they dated from the time of Moses, in whose name they were enforced. How was it possible, then, that so pious a man as Samuel should transgress these divine decrees? It could not be. Nor would God have allowed so great a sin to go unpunished. Samuel, therefore, must have been a Levite. This was the first step towards the invention of these pedigrees. But the truth is, as we have observed more than once already, that it was not till five centuries after Samuel's time that the Levites established their exclusive right to the exercise of priestly functions, and it was quite a century later yet before the rights and duties of the Aaronites and the other Levites were accurately defined and the forms of worship regulated in accordance with the new ideas. In Samuel's time no one had the remotest conception of any such laws, and there was no religious objection to any individual's sacrificing where and when he chose.

[1] 1 Chronicles vi. 16–28, 33–38. [2] See pp. 379, 380.
[3] See vol. iii. chapter i. [4] 1 Samuel vii. 9, ix. 13, x. 8, xvi. 2 ff.

From the consideration of Samuel's extraction, we naturally go on to the account of what took place before his birth. There is nothing impossible in what we are told about it — that Hannah had long waited for the joy of motherhood before she had a child, and that she looked upon the birth of her son as a sign that Yahweh had heard her prayers. But there is one feature in the story which is certainly fictitious — I mean the statement that Hannah called her child Samuel, "because she had gained him from Yahweh by her prayer;" for "Samuel" cannot possibly mean "the prayed for," or anything of the kind. It is not unlikely, therefore, that the materials of the story itself were, to some extent, supplied by this false derivation of the name. It seems natural enough that people should have been ready to believe that any extraordinary man had been long hoped and waited for;[1] and the stories of the birth of Isaac, of Esau and Jacob, of Samson, and of John the Baptist, together with many parallel stories found amongst other peoples, all show how readily this idea occurred to people's minds.

As to the further account of Samuel's early life, this much is certain, that he enjoyed great fame as a seer. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that what he witnessed at the sanctuary first roused the prophetic impulse within him, and that his first prophecy — uttered, it may be, after many a bitter struggle with himself — was an announcement of the fall of the priests of Shiloh, as a punishment of their impiety. But however willing we may be to admit the truth of this, it does not at all follow that we are to accept the whole narrative as it stands, without further examination. Indeed, we cannot possibly do so; for the actual appearance of Yahweh to Samuel, the connection of Hannah's prayer and Eli's promise with the child's birth, and, subsequently, with that of his brothers and sisters, and the circumstantial prediction of the unknown prophet who first warned Eli, are all of them accepted by our author with the same unquestioning belief.

In conclusion, let us turn our attention to the contents of this anonymous prophecy. It gives us the key to the writer's meaning, and so puts us in a position to take a general view of the whole narrative. That this prophecy was written some time after the date at which it is supposed to have been uttered, is obvious from what it says of the faithful priest who was to supersede the house of Eli. This priest is to walk "before the face of Yahweh's anointed;"[2] and in Hannah's song of

[1] See vol. iii. chapter ii.

[2] 1 Samuel ii. 35.

praise this "anointed of Yahweh" appears again.[1] The expression can only mean the king of Israel: and in Samuel's youth, when Israel had no king, it would have had no meaning. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion, therefore, that both Hannah's song of praise and this prophecy date from a time when Israel was governed by a king.

To understand the story rightly it will be necessary to anticipate the course of the history, and to describe the condition of the priests of Shiloh under the first kings of Israel. Several descendants of Eli still appear as friends of Saul and David, but the sanctuary at Shiloh had seen its best days when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines. In David's time it was gradually overshadowed by Jerusalem, to which city the ark had been removed, and its glory faded quite away when Solomon built the temple on Mount Zion, which at once became the great national sanctuary, to which the tribes went up on pilgrimage. No grandchildren of Hophni and Phinehas, but Zadok and his family were the priests of this new temple, and any descendant of Eli who desired to earn his bread in some priestly capacity was dependent upon these Zadokites. It must have been when Zadok "walked before the face of Yahweh's anointed," that is David or Solomon, and was blessed as a "faithful priest," that this oracle was really composed, though put into the mouth of a prophet of the time of Samuel's youth. The writer, who was a supporter of Zadok, looked back upon the former fame and influence of Eli's priestly house, and strove to give a reason for its fall. As far as he knew, this family had served the altar of Yahweh ever since the Israelites came out of Egypt. Whether this was really so or whether Eli's ancestors had at least been connected with the ark at Shiloh ever since the conquest, we can no longer tell, for we know nothing of the previous history of the family. We cannot even say to which tribe it belonged. The book of Chronicles does indeed make Ahimelech, one of Eli's progeny, a descendant of Ithamar, the son of Aaron:[2] but this proves nothing, since the writer could not have conceived such a thing as a high priest who did not belong to the house of Aaron.[3]

It is not of much consequence to what tribe Eli's house belonged; but the history of the fall of this priestly family gives us abundant food for reflection. Once it was prosperous and influential. The priests of the most celebrated sanctuary in Israel could not but be powerful; for popular assemblies would

[1] 1 Samuel ii. 10. [2] 1 Chronicles xxiv. 3. [3] See p. 442.

often be held in their neighborhood, especially at the time of the great feasts, questions of varied interest would be raised, and divine responses often asked. In that time of confusion, when as yet there was no king in Israel, the priests at Shiloh were doubtless looked upon by many Israelites as their natural guides and rulers. But in the course of time all this was changed. Shiloh was thrown into the shade by Jerusalem, and Eli's house by Zadok and his sons. How did this come to pass? The writer of the prophecy and of the whole legend to which it belongs answers: Through the sins of Eli's sons and the weakness of their father. History gives other reasons. The loss of the ark, the rise of David the Judæan to the throne, the erection of the temple at Zion, — these are so many causes of the fall of the priests of Shiloh, which have nothing to do with their virtue or vice. If they had done their part, let another take up the task! This is how the work of the world is done, and we can reconcile ourselves to it easily enough if only all is done to the glory of God. But alas! the family of Eli fell ingloriously, and to some extent at least by its own fault. Wealth and honor had made it overweening. Its long hold of power had made it careless and reckless. It ceased to honor the god whose altar it served. It had long been the salt of Israel, but now the salt had lost its savor and must be thrown aside.

What a striking type of many a community and many an institution for philanthropical objects or the spread of the kingdom of God! They, too, grow old in the course of time. Their machinery grows stiff. The spirit has gone out of them. At last they are superseded by others. Let them go!

But from the midst of these mournful relics of what was once a spiritual power, new life springs up. Eli's race becomes degenerate; but Samuel grows up in the midst of it and brings new life with him, while Eli's place is taken by another. The corruption of this or that family, people, community, or Church may delay the coming of God's kingdom, but cannot prevent it.

Chapter XXIII.

SAMUEL'S WORK.

1 Samuel VII. 2–17.

WE shall presently see what became of the ark, and how, after all kinds of adventures, it rested for a time at Kirjath-jearim. Meanwhile we must try to discover the special characteristics of Samuel's work. The task is far from easy, and if our object were simply to reproduce the substance of the Bible stories, we might almost entirely save ourselves the trouble of dealing with the character of Samuel's work at all. But since we are attempting to sketch the history of Israel and its religion in connection with these stories, we must not omit to describe the special movements due to Samuel.

When the ark had been twenty years at Kirjath-jearim the complaints of the Israelites under the heavy yoke of the Philistines began to grow louder and louder. They could bear it no longer. The time was therefore come when Samuel's words might find a hearing. He directed his people to the only true means of deliverance: he urged them to repent. "Turn with all your soul to Yahweh, and put away the strange gods and Astartes! Give your whole heart to Yahweh, and serve him alone!" The Israelites, in their dire necessity, gave ear to his reproof, and forsook the worship of their Baals and Astartes. Thus deliverance became possible, and accordingly Samuel summoned the whole people to Mizpeh to join with him in prayer for Israel.

The sons of Israel drew together in great numbers. The solemn day arrived. A universal fast was observed. The priests poured out water by Yahweh's altar, and crying "Lord! we are lost, even as water that is poured out!" besought him for deliverance. The people lay down in sack-cloth and ashes, and smote their breasts, sighing, "We have sinned!" and Samuel sat in judgment over them. Woe to him who was charged with any offence to which the people's misery might in some measure be assigned! Woe to him who had "committed folly in Israel!" He had small mercy to expect from either judge or people, and the stern sentence was ruthlessly carried out. Thus was Israel purified at Mizpeh.

But the Philistines had heard that there was to be an assembly of the people, and fearing that the Israelites would rebel, they had determined to be beforehand with them. Their princes, accordingly, had called their troops together, and at that very moment they were all marching upon Mizpeh. Consternation seizes the Israelites. They are undone! Samuel is besieged with supplications: "Oh, pray to Yahweh for us, and cease not! Our god must rescue us! Withdraw not your help from us!" With unshaken faith in Yahweh's mighty help Samuel girds himself to battle with the foe; but it is not with spear and bow that he enters on the fight. All his hopes are fixed on Yahweh. He draws up the Israelites in battle array, and raises an altar on the hill. The Philistines draw near. The sons of Israel can see the glitter of their spear-heads, they can hear the arrows rattling in the quivers, and the deafening war-cries that foretell the fall of Israel. . . . But meanwhile Samuel has sacrificed a sucking lamb; the smoke curls upwards, and the prophet lifts up his hands to heaven. "O Yahweh, rescue Israel! Give not thy people into the hands of the uncircumcised!" So he prays, and behold! Yahweh answers. A fearful peal of thunder rolls overhead. It is the voice of Yahweh. The Philistines stand riveted to the ground. Another and another peal! See! a panic of God has come upon them, and they dash against each other in confused and hurried flight, while the men of Israel pursue them.

Well might Samuel raise a great stone near Mizpeh when the victory was won, and call it Eben-ezer (or *stone of help*): for had not Yahweh thus far helped the people? Yes, and with no grudging hand; for the Philistines were so humbled that they surrendered all the cities they had previously taken from the Israelites, and even gave them Gath and Ekron. It need hardly be said, therefore, that as long as Samuel lived they did not show themselves upon Israel's territory again, for Yahweh's hand was heavy on them all this time. And since there was peace between Israel and the Canaanites also, it was a time of general prosperity.

Samuel was the recognized judge of all the tribes. He lived in Ramah, where he had built an altar; and many pilgrims came there to submit their difficulties to his decision. But, with the view of maintaining order and justice as effectually as possible, he now and then made a journey through the surrounding districts and visited Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh every year.

We have already seen, from more than one example, that the people reverenced certain sacred stones, and treated them with superstitious regard long after their original significance had been forgotten. In such cases the advocates of the exclusive worship of Yahweh often declared that the stones were monuments of some event which would bring them into harmless connection with the service of Yahweh.[1] It is natural to suppose therefore that this was the case with the "Eben-ezer" near Mizpeh; but it is also quite possible that the inhabitants of the neighborhood did really associate with this piece of rock the memory of a victory won by Samuel at the spot. In any case, however, the story of this judge's warlike fame is not only highly colored but monstrously exaggerated by the legend: for we shall presently see that in his days the Israelites were so completely in the power of the Philistines that they were compelled to give up their weapons, while all the smiths were carried away out of the land, and there were only two Israelite warriors who possessed weapons forged of steel. Nay! if a man's ploughshare, or any other metal implement, wanted sharpening, he was actually obliged to take it to the country of the Philistines, and have it seen to there.[2] It was David who first completely conquered the Philistines and made them powerless against Israel. Our writer took for granted that Samuel had secured his people prosperity and success, and had triumphed over their enemies; for he could not imagine that Yahweh would have refused to hear and accept the prayer of such a pious man. His supposition is, however, contradicted by the sequel of the history. For if Samuel had really overcome the Philistines, Israel would never have chosen a king. His attempts to deliver his people, so far from being successful, completely failed. Nor is it true — as we shall presently see — that there was peace in his days between the Israelites and the Canaanites.

Samuel's great services did not consist in military successes, but in what he accomplished for the religious life of his people; and to form a true estimate of his work we must have a clear idea of what was going on in the heads and hearts of the best Israelites of his age.

It was a time of general spiritual awakening. The precise occasion of the movement is no longer known to us, but it is evident that just at this period the most zealous worshippers

[1] Compare pp. 105, 175 ff., 196; pp. 341, 354.
[2] 1 Samuel xiii. 19–22, after an amended version.

of Yahweh and champions of his people gathered strength, and made themselves felt as they had not been before. The sanctuary at Shiloh was diligently sought, and Eli, the chief priest there, acquired so much influence that he is even called a judge.[1] This enthusiasm was constantly stimulated by the special circumstances of the people at the time, for we must not forget that zeal for Yahweh and zeal for Israel always went hand in hand, and indeed, as a rule, were almost identical. It was becoming clearer and clearer to the thoughtful Israelites that the great question they had to decide was this: "Are we to melt away and disappear amongst the Canaanites, or are we to maintain our special Israelitish character based on the worship of Yahweh, cost what it may?" There was no other choice. If the sons of Israel went on in the path they had trodden hitherto, and were not prepared to make any extraordinary effort, then the customs, the religious practices, and the modes of thought of Canaan would gain the mastery, and Israel would never attain a distinct national existence. Yahweh would gradually give place to some Baal, or perhaps be superseded by a Philistine deity, until at last his worship would only survive in a few private families. If the people of Yahweh was ever to master the land of Canaan, it must be now — now or never!

This conviction was gaining ground more and more rapidly when Samuel succeeded to Eli's position and made his influence deeply felt. To enable us to understand his work it will be well to consider three subjects in succession: The exercise of his office as judge, the foundation of the schools of the prophets, and the order of the Nazarites.

We are obliged to have recourse to conjecture in attempting to form an idea of the "judging" of the men who gave the period between Joshua and Saul its name. Indeed the name itself is very misleading, for the heroes who rescued Israel from its foes had, as a rule, very little of the character of judges, and should rather receive some such title as rulers, princes, or chieftains.[2] Samuel is the first whose activity as a judge is in any degree known to us, and it is but very little we know even in this case. We are told of three places which he visited every year in his capacity as judge. These places — Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh — were none of them very far from his dwelling-place at Ramah; and though he is said in general terms to have judged "Israel," we may be sure that a comparatively small area was the principal scene

[1] 1 Samuel iv. 18. [2] See pp. 364, 365.

of his activity. When Samuel was still at Shiloh, all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Yahweh had chosen him as his messenger,[1] but the difficulties of travelling were such that but few would come to Ramah from the outlying districts of the country to seek advice from Samuel; nor would he, on his part, be aware of what took place at a distance from Benjamin's territory. But though his influence was most powerfully felt in his own city and its neighborhood, it doubtless spread from this centre over the whole country, especially as the Israelites were more closely united to each other in his days than they had ever been before.

We have no direct information as to Samuel's principles of government or the objects he strove to realize as a ruler; but indirectly we learn several important facts, and from these again we may fairly draw yet further conclusions. We know that in the early part of his reign king Saul ruled in the spirit of Samuel, and we can therefore argue from the actions of the monarch to the principles of the judge. Now, we find it recorded of Saul[2] that he banished the soothsayers and necromancers out of Israel, and forbade the practice of their arts upon pain of death. In the same spirit one of the most ancient Israelite codes of law[3] ordains with abrupt simplicity: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." We are safe in assuming, therefore, that Samuel persecuted all those who were reputed to be inspired by a soothsaying spirit or to have the power of calling up the dead from the land of shadows. It is not easy to tell exactly what difference there was supposed to be between these soothsayers and a man like Samuel himself, who was known as a "seer." For he too was believed to have the power of gaining information inaccessible by any natural means, and even of revealing the future.[4] But the distinction, whatever it may have been, was still preserved in the later legislation.[5] It certainly was not supposed that while the seer or prophet of Yahweh did really understand the future, the soothsayer or necromancer was an impostor. The case is precisely similar to that of the magicians in Egypt, against whom Moses and Aaron contended. According to the old narrator these magicians were able to perform real miracles,[6] and in the same way the Israelites believed that the soothsayers foretold the future with perfect accuracy, and that the necromancers actually summoned the shades from the

[1] 1 Samuel iii. 20. [2] 1 Samuel xxviii. 3, 9.
[3] Exodus xxii. 18. [4] 1 Samuel iii., ix. 6, 15 ff., x. 2 ff., xv. 10 ff., xvi.
[5] Deuteronomy xviii. 10–15. [6] Compare pp. 271–273.

world below.[1] The difference between these heathens and the pious worshippers of Yahweh depended entirely upon the source from which they derived their respective powers. In the one case the power to foretell the future was derived from Yahweh, in the other it was conferred by the soothsaying spirits. The orthodox Israelites by no means denied the existence of these spirits. On the contrary one of the lawgivers defines a magician as "one in whom there is a soothsaying spirit."[2] But a faithful worshipper of Yahweh must not listen to them, must not "lust after them," as it was called.[3]

We may treat these persecutions of the wizards and witches therefore as a proof of hostility to heathenism and a desire to maintain the true Israelitish characteristics of the people. In this case they form part of the same policy which dictated the oppression of the Canaanites that is also ascribed to Saul. "In his zeal for the sons of Israel," we are told,[4] he endeavored to root out the Gibeonites. These Gibeonites were a remnant of the old population; but they do not appear in the character of slaves of the temple, as the writer of the book of Joshua makes them,[5] but as independent freemen. Saul would certainly have hesitated to rob an Israelitish sanctuary of its servants. The Gibeonites evidently formed a little Canaanite kingdom which the Israelites were bound, by an ancient and solemn treaty, not to molest. But their territory lay in the midst of the tribe of Benjamin, which was the centre of the revival of the religious life of Israel, and it was therefore a greater source of irritation to the Israelites than any similar kingdom which had survived from the olden time. In neglecting the ancient treaties with the Canaanites, whom he oppressed and in many cases actually put to death, Saul was doubtless acting in the spirit of Samuel. Simeon and Levi, as sketched in the legend, avenging their sister's shame with the edge of the sword, careless of the hatred they roused in the hearts of the still powerful Canaanites, and the danger to which they exposed the lives of their relatives,[6] — these were the men after Samuel's heart. "Let everything go to ruin sooner than that Israel should intermarry with the stranger," was his cry. We can imagine how, when he held judgment, or had any other opportunity of influencing his countrymen, he fostered the Israelite's feeling of his national

[1] See chapter xxx. p. 525. [2] Leviticus xx. 27. [3] Leviticus xx. 6.
[4] 2 Samuel xxi. 2. [5] See p. 349. [6] See pp. 396–403.

dignity, stimulated his hatred of the Canaanites, prevented or dissolved mixed marriages, urged his hearers to deeds of violence against the Canaanites, destroyed their temples, and made the worshippers feel the weight of his wrath in word and deed.

We have assumed that Samuel vindicated the slighted honor of Israel's god, so closely connected with that of the people, by deeds of violence and even of bloodshed: and we are justified in so doing, for antiquity knew no weapon but the sword for securing the triumph of truth; and Yahweh was a terrible fire-god, who would not suffer himself to be insulted unavenged, and who delighted in offerings of blood. Moreover we shall see that on the few occasions when Samuel was in a position to act with severity, he was invariably the advocate of sanguinary measures. It was he who commanded Saul to lay a whole people under the ban, and who "hewed" a captive prince "in pieces before Yahweh"[1] with his own hand. All his relations to Saul mark him as stern and inexorable. The ordinances of Yahweh which he enforced were doubtless the severe and sanguinary customs which were already beginning here and there to give place to gentler practices. If Samuel could prevent it no blood-redeemer should suffer himself to be appeased by money, and no vow should be broken by the redemption of the consecrated object. Whoever committed an act of gross unchastity, or laid his hand on that which was holy, was stoned to death, together with all his family, that his name might be rooted out from among the holy people of Yahweh.

Such was the spirit in which Samuel pronounced judgment and ruled in Israel.

"What is now called *a prophet* used formerly (in Samuel's time) to be known as *a seer*." This noteworthy assertion is made by a writer who lived in the golden age of prophecy;[2] and it is confirmed by several other passages, which show that the name of "seer" was still in use even after Samuel's time.[3] There is no difficulty in understanding what was meant by the word. It meant a soothsayer; one whom his god favored from time to time with glimpses of the future, by dreams or otherwise. We saw just now that if the Israelite rejected soothsaying, he did so only in as far as it was connected with heathenism, and that the functions

[1] 1 Samuel xv. 1 ff., 33. [2] 1 Samuel ix. 9.
[3] 2 Samuel xxiv. 11; 1 Chronicle xxi. 9.

of a seer of Yahweh were essentially the same as those of a heathen wizard. The statement that a prophet was formerly called a seer seems to show that at that time the distinguishing mark of a prophet was his power of reading the future. Unquestionably the prophets themselves laid claim to this power, and the Israelites of every age believed that the difference between a true and a false prophet was simply this: that the true prophet drew his inspiration from Yahweh, and the false prophet derived it from some other source. And yet we should be doing the Israelite prophets great injustice if we looked upon their calling as no better than the practice of magic. It is true that the prophets usually appeared in the character of soothsayers, and that many of them were really nothing better. But it is something far nobler which gives them their irresistible claim to our attention. It is the religious enthusiasm which in its several degrees was common to them all.

The word *prophet* is from the Greek, and means "one who foretells;" but the Hebrew word *nabi*, which we translate *prophet*, has a different meaning. The exact interpretation of the word is uncertain, but it is used of one in a state of ecstasy or transport. The verb derived from it, which we translate "to prophesy," was sometimes even used in a bad sense of being raving mad.[1] The prophet, then, was known by the ecstatic utterances of an enthusiasm and excitement attributed to the inspiration of some deity. He was not always under this influence, but only by fits and starts, when the spirit of God came upon him, or rested on him as it was called. When these seasons or moments of spiritual excitement were over the prophet was once more an ordinary man; perhaps quite as calm as his neighbors.[2] Sometimes, therefore, when he wished to be inspired, but "the hand of his god was not upon him," he would try to bring himself into the desired frame of mind by means of stimulating music.[3]

Such phenomena were by no means rare in the religious life of the ancients. We find them, for instance, amongst the Canaanites,[4] and they still reappear from time to time when men of low intellectual development are seized by some religious idea and give the rein to their emotion till it passes into a frenzy. These "revivals" are generally of a decidedly morbid character, and bear little or no good fruit. Nay,

[1] 1 Samuel xviii. 10.
[2] Numbers xi. 25.
[3] 2 Kings iii. 15. Compare 1 Samuel x. 5.
[4] 1 Kings xviii. 19 ff.

under the guidance of ignorant enthusiasts, they have often become the means of trampling down the truth. In itself, therefore, the appearance of these "inspired" Israelites proves nothing to the nation's credit. Baal, too, had his prophets. Everything depends upon the religious truth which the prophet had grasped, and the exaltation of the ideas for which his enthusiasm glowed. We shall often observe in the sequel of the history that the moral tone of many of the Israelite prophets left much to be desired. They spoke in Yahweh's name, indeed, but their conception of Yahweh and his will was extremely narrow. Others, however, must take rank amongst the greatest and noblest of mankind, and it was they who preserved Israel from destruction. Now this Israelitish prophecy, like every other special manifestation of the religious life, has had its history, its rise, its glory, its decay, its fall; and at present we have to consider its rise.

Moses is called a prophet more than once;[1] Deborah also bears this name,[2] and on several occasions the historians bring a prophet upon the scene even before Samuel's time.[3] But this does not prove that prophecy had really taken root amongst the Israelites as early as the exodus from Egypt; it simply shows that the prophets recognized spirits kindred to their own in Moses and in some of the judges; — while the prophet who warns Israel[4] and the man of God who comes to Eli[5] are historical fictions to be classed with the angel of Yahweh who is said in another passage to have exhorted the people at Bochim.[6] As for Moses, we are expressly told that his power was not derived from the fitful inspiration which specially characterized the prophets.[7] But still we may take it for granted that religious phenomena similar to those of prophecy did now and then appear even before Samuel. In speaking, then, of the rise of prophecy in connection with his work, we do not mean that it suddenly sprang into existence just at this time, still less that Samuel called it into existence; but in the first place that it was in his time and partly through his influence that it became a power in Israel, and in the second place that he endeavored to direct the spiritual life that was being awakened all around him, and to make it subservient to the welfare of the people.

In the times of spiritual and political tension during

[1] Deuteronomy xviii. 15, 18, xxxiv. 10–12, and elsewhere.
[2] Judges iv. 4.
[3] Numbers xi. 16 ff.; Judges vi. 8–10.
[4] Judges vi. 7–10.
[5] 1 Samuel ii. 27.
[6] Judges ii. 1–5.
[7] Numbers xii. 6–8

which the sons of Israel looked up to Samuel as the seer of Yahweh, it sometimes happened that certain zealots of Yahweh were seized by a religious enthusiasm for which the raptures of the prophets of Baal and other Canaanite gods and goddesses served to some extent as a model; for enthusiasm is infectious. When several of these zealots met together, they were particularly liable to fall into such ecstasies. Bands of fanatics would sometimes storm through the country with wild music and half-frenzied songs. Woe to the Canaanite who met them on their way! Whatever had been consecrated to the religion of the former masters of the land was destroyed as soon as the eyes of the "inspired" band fell upon it; and it went hard with the Israelite whose indifference in his people's cause had roused their indignation. After a time, regular companies of these young zealots came to be formed here and there. Thus they quickened one another's enthusiasm, until their meetings gradually became the centres of the political and religious life of the people. These communities are usually called the "schools of the prophets." There is no particular objection to this name as long as we do not allow it to suggest an institution in which young men were taught the art of prophesying; for this art could not be taught. The young prophets all lived together,[1] and the name of "cloister" would, therefore, be better than "school," were it not that the word makes us think involuntarily of a place in which the inmates are compelled to remain. This was not the case with the prophets, for they were entirely free, and some of them were married. The Hebrew name for the "school" or "cloister" (naioth) we are not able to interpret; and our authorized version has simply left it untranslated in the only passage in which it occurs.[2] The cloister there alluded to is that in Ramah, Samuel's dwelling-place. Samuel himself stood at the head of this institution, or at least prophesied amongst its members. Such a leader was called the "father," while the disciples were known as "sons of the prophets." Such at least was the custom two centuries later.

The Nazarite vow is very properly classed with the rise of prophecy[3] as an expression of the awakened life of the people. In other respects the two movements have little in common. A Nazarite of Yahweh (the word either means *one consecrated* or *an abstainer*) was one who abstained from wine

[1] 2 Kings vi. 1 ff. [2] 1 Samuel xix. 18–xx. 1. [3] Compare Amos ii. 11.

and intoxicating drinks, and everything produced by the vine. As an outward sign he wore his hair uncut. We have already had instances of this vow in the stories of the birth of Samson and of Samuel. A law written after the captivity[1] contains certain regulations as to the temporary form of the Nazarite vow. In addition to abstaining from wine, and letting his hair grow, the Nazarite must be careful not to become unclean by contact with a dead body. If he has been so unfortunate as to break his vow accidentally, he is told how he must expiate his offence, and at the close of the period of his abstinence he must perform certain ceremonies and sacrifices which are accurately defined. This temporary abstinence, however, is but a feeble echo of the original vow which was taken for life.

We can easily understand what it was that gave rise to this movement. The most essential feature of the vow of the Nazarites is abstinence from wine.[2] They were not alone in this custom, but found allies in the Rechabites, a section of the Kenites.[3] These Rechabites not only abstained from wine, but refused to live in settled homes. This they did in obedience to the command of their forefather Jonadab,[4] a zealous worshipper of Yahweh, who lived in the time of king Jehu,[5] about 880 B.C. His motive in giving this command was probably the same as that of the Nazarites in the time of the Judges. When the Israelites had thrown off the yoke of Egyptian slavery they grew accustomed to a rough and simple style of life in the wilderness; but when they settled in Canaan they came into contact with more highly cultivated and luxurious manners, tasted their enjoyment, and perceived their danger. In their vow of abstinence the Nazarites declared war upon this luxury, and thus became the representatives not only of a moral principle, but of everything in which the genuine old-fashioned Israelite character was opposed to that of the Canaanites.

We cannot say with certainty why the Nazarites let their hair grow long. Indeed it is only a conjecture that this order was instituted, as we have supposed, at the close of the period of the Judges. But since Samson and Samuel are the only Nazarites of whom we read, it is natural to suppose that the order flourished at the time in which their history places us. Again, the prophet Amos seems to connect the rise of this order with the early period of prophecy, for he repre-

[1] Numbers vi. 1–21. [2] Amos ii. 12.
[3] Compare pp. 357, 367 ff. [4] Jeremiah xxxv. [5] 2 Kings x. 15,16.

sents Yahweh as saying,[1] "I have raised up prophets from your sons and Nazarites from your young men." Moreover we should naturally expect that such an institution might arise during the period of religious ferment and exaltation which preceded the foundation of the monarchy in Israel.

We have now collected all the available materials for forming an estimate of Samuel's work amongst his people. We cannot tell how long his labors lasted; for though we are told that he began his active work twenty years after the ark had come to Kirjath-jearim, the statement does not help us much, since it belongs to the artificial system of chronology that makes the framework of the book of Judges, allowing exactly four hundred and eighty years to elapse between the exodus from Egypt and the building of Solomon's temple.[2] Tradition represents Samuel as administering justice, year by year, in different places in the neighborhood of Ramah, and as ruling Israel till he had reached extreme old age.[3] We may suppose, therefore, that he labored for his people many years.

The nature of his work may be shortly summed up thus: He gave a powerful stimulus to the religious life of the Israelites, and guided it with a firm hand. Since he was himself both a Nazarite and a prophet, he doubtless contributed greatly to the institution of the prophetic schools, and urged others to take the vow of the Nazarites. We find him constantly engaged in offering sacrifices to Yahweh, and assembling at the sacrificial meal the elders of the places where the rites were performed.[4] On these occasions we can fancy how his inspiring exhortations would rouse his fellow believers to glorify Yahweh and be zealous for his people. Again, he took every opportunity of maintaining the principles of Yahweh-worship in the spirit of Moses, upholding all that was genuinely Israelitish, and combating the Canaanitish principles and customs.

By these means he doubtless hoped to rescue Israel and make it independent. "O Israel! If you turn with all your heart to Yahweh, he will deliver you from the hand of the Philistines!" Such are the words put into Samuel's mouth by one of the historians,[5] and they doubtless express his opinions perfectly. Religious reformation, zeal in the worship of Yahweh, he thought, was the only way to prosperity.

[1] Amos ii. 11. [2] See p. 365. [3] 1 Samuel viii. 1, xxviii. 14.
[4] 1 Samuel ix, 12 ff., x 8, xi. 15, xiii. 10, xvi. 2 ff. [5] 1 Samuel vii. 3.

Was the desired end obtained in this way? History answers in the negative. Unless the people — far less pious than Samuel, but far more sensible — had demanded a king, Israel would have been undone. This is quite obvious. Though sin is a stain upon the life of a people, and superstition coupled with immorality sooner or later brings a nation to destruction, yet something more than piety on the part of its inhabitants is needed to make a country rich and powerful. The deliberation of a wise statesmanship is indispensable, the exercise of arts and sciences most valuable, commerce and industry absolutely necessary; and the awakening of fresh religious life, so far from necessarily producing all these things, may, under certain circumstances, be eminently hostile to them. For a people that follows one-sided principles, proclaimed in the name of God, will often endanger and even throw away its own prosperity. The history of Israel furnishes many striking examples of this very fact.

Samuel was on the high-road towards compassing his people's ruin. "There was peace in his days between Israel and the Amorites," says our narrator.[1] The statement is as far from the truth as the same author's account of the humiliation of the Philistines by his hero. Samuel was not the man to be at peace with the Amorites or any other Canaanites. He strove tooth and nail to root out everything Canaanitish, cost what it might. It was just because the inhabitants of Canaan were thus at daggers drawn with each other, that they were so powerless against the Philistines and Amorites.

If the people had allowed Samuel to pursue his course, he would have brought Israel to destruction. But it would have fallen gloriously, for it would have sacrificed itself to its higher interests — to its religion. Samuel may have been a bad statesman, but he was a noble champion of religion. He was one of those immovable men of principle who would involve the world in ruin, if they reigned supreme, because the rules of their religious and moral systems are incapable, at present, of being put into practice. But yet these men are the salt of the earth. For surely the world would grow corrupt and degenerate, and its statecraft would sink into a slough of commonplace, selfish meanness did not such men urge it forward towards their ideals, and constantly remind it of the motives by which it ought to be actuated.

[1] 1 Samuel vii. 14 b.

Chapter XXIV.

HOW SAUL BECAME KING OF ISRAEL.

1 Samuel VIII.–XII.

THE institution of the monarchy in Israel was a step of the utmost importance to the people; nor was it finally accomplished without violent opposition. The verdict of posterity, too, was far from unanimous on it; and since the Israelite historians were in the habit of clothing their opinions in the form of historical narratives, we cannot be surprised to find different accounts of the manner in which Saul became king. These accounts contradict each other throughout, and in many respects the one breathes quite a different spirit from the other; but yet they are placed side by side in the section of the first book of Samuel referred to at the head of the chapter. We will consult the oldest tradition first.[1] It runs as follows:

In the days of Samuel there lived a certain valiant Benjamite whose name was Kish. His son Saul was a goodly man. In stature he was a head taller than ordinary men, and in all other respects he was without a peer in Israel. Now it happened one day that his father sent him with one of the slaves to look for some she-asses that had strayed. So Saul and his servant searched the whole country round, but all in vain, for they could not find the asses. When they came near Ramah Saul began to think they had better go home again, for he was afraid his father might be growing uneasy at his long absence. But the servant had another plan. They were now close to Ramah, where there dwelt a man of God — a seer whose fame had spread far and wide, for all his predictions turned out true. Why should they not apply to him? Perhaps he would be able to tell them where the lost asses were. Saul would have been ready enough to consult the seer if he had had anything to offer him as a present; but they could not approach the soothsayer with empty hands: their provisions were exhausted, and Saul had nothing else about him that would answer his purpose. Fortunately, however, the servant happened to have a quarter of a shekel of silver (about *eightpence* of our money) with him. They had no doubt that the seer would consult his god for this fee; so they went together to Ramah.

[1] 1 Samuel ix. 1–x. 16.

At the foot of the hill on which the city stood ("Ramah" means *hill*) they found some girls drawing water, and asked them where they could find the seer. They were told that he was at home just then, but that they had better make haste, for he would soon be on his way to the *bamah*, the sacred height near the city. A great sacrificial feast was to be held there, and the guests would not begin the meal until the seer had pronounced his blessing over it. On hearing this, they made the best of their way up the hill into Ramah. They were almost too late as it was, for in the middle of the city they met Samuel, who had just set off for the *bamah*.

Little did Saul suspect what was going on in the heart of the seer, whom neither he nor his companion knew by sight. The day before, Yahweh had told Samuel that he had heard the lamentations of his people, and that on the following day he should send a Benjamite to him whom he must anoint as prince, and who should rescue Israel out of the power of the Philistines. Now as soon as Samuel's eye had fallen on Saul, Yahweh said to him, "This is the man of whom I spoke to you. He shall rule over Israel." No wonder, then, that when Saul addressed him, and inquired for the seer's house, Samuel was too full of what Yahweh had revealed to him to be content with giving a simple answer to the question. "I am the seer," he cried; "come with me to the altar on the hill, and share the sacrificial meal. To-morrow morning I will let you go, and will answer all that is in your heart to ask me; but as for the she-asses that were lost, for which you have been searching hard upon three days, they are found already. And why should you trouble yourself about them? Shall not all the treasures of Israel be yours and your family's?"[1] "Mine!" cried Saul, in amazement. "Why, I belong to the little tribe of Benjamin, and to one of the smallest clans of the tribe!"

But no further explanation of these extraordinary words appeared to be forthcoming. Samuel led the way in silence, and Saul and his servant followed him to the place of sacrifice. About thirty persons were assembled in the hall where the feast was to be held, and places of honor were assigned to both the strangers. The seer had evidently expected them, for he beckoned to the cook and said, "Bring the piece of meat that I told you to set aside!" Upon this the cook brought him a whole ox-thigh, well fleshed and fat — a royal dish! Samuel had it set before Saul, and said, "Take this,

[1] After an amended version.

for it was set aside for none but you, as a sign to the people [1] that the royal share is yours."

When they had finished their meal, they returned from the *bamah* to Samuel's house, where a bed was prepared for Saul upon the roof.[1] Early the next morning Samuel roused him, and offered to accompany him on his way home. As soon as they were outside the city, Samuel requested Saul to send his servant on in front, and to stay behind himself to hear the word of God.

Then the man of God took a horn full of oil, poured the contents over the head of Saul, and then, as he kissed his cheek in homage, he exclaimed, "Yahweh anoints you prince of his heritage. You shall rescue it out of the hand of the Philistines. And these three signs shall prove the truth of what I say: When you go hence you will meet two men by Rachel's grave, and they will tell you that the she-asses have come home, and that your father is now only anxious about you yourself. After that you will meet three men at Deborah's oak,[2] on their way to the sanctuary at Bethel, the first carrying three kids, the second three loaves of bread, the third a bottle of wine. They will salute you and offer you two loaves of bread, which you must accept. Then, when you come to Gibeah (that is *the hill*) of God, where the trophy [3] of the Philistines stands, a band of prophets will meet you at the entrance of the city. They will come down from the *bamah*, with drums and tambourines, flutes and harps, playing before them, while they themselves are prophesying. Then the spirit of Yahweh will come upon you too; you will break into a holy ecstasy and become another man. When these signs have made you confident that Yahweh has indeed called you, then you yourself will know what next to do, for your god will help you. But when you come to Gilgal wait there seven days, for I shall come there too to offer sacrifices. Then I will tell you what to do."

Hardly had Saul bid adieu to Samuel and turned to pursue his journey when he felt a change come over his whole nature. One after another the signs came true. At last, as they drew near to Gibeah, the band of prophets, in their wild ecstasy, confronted them; and lo! the spirit of Yahweh came upon Saul, and he too prophesied. His friends looked on in amazement, and said, "What has come over the son of Kish? Is

[1] After an amended version.
[2] After an amended version. See Genesis xxxv. 8.
[3] After an amended version.

Saul among the prophets?" "How comes he to be amongst them," cried another? "Who is his father? Is it not Kish?"[1] This event gave rise to the proverbial expression, "Saul among the prophets." Unconscious of the surprise of his acquaintances, Saul went on prophesying till he came to Gibeah.[1] He had an uncle living at Gibeah, and, when questioned by him, he told him all that Samuel had said about the asses. But he did not say a single word about his having been anointed.

This narrative was evidently composed long after Saul's appearance as a public man. For it attempts to explain the proverbial expression, "Saul among the prophets!"—an exclamation of surprise used when a man was found in company where no one would have thought of looking for him. Elsewhere we have another and far more probable interpretation of the expression,[2] and, at any rate, the one we are now considering cannot be the true one; for Saul must have been very generally known before his joining with the prophets could give rise to a popular proverb expressive of surprise. Indeed the proverb seems to imply that when it came into use Saul had already manifested a hostile disposition towards the prophets; and this, as we shall see, carries us down to a later period of his reign.

But in other respects this narrative reflects the real position of things in Israel very faithfully. It assumes that the Israelites were oppressed by the Philistines, and that the chief task of the new ruler would be to deliver them from this foe. Again, Samuel is truly represented as exercising far less power than is assigned to him in a preceding[3] and also in a subsequent story. Here he is simply a seer, who has indeed a great reputation, but of whose existence Saul has to be reminded by his servant. He by no means appears as the acknowledged ruler of the land. It also deserves notice that in this story Saul is never called "king," but always "prince." All this shows that the writer could readily adopt, or perhaps naturally shared in, the style of thought and language usual in the times of which he wrote; and this gives his narrative a certain air of historical fidelity.

And yet we cannot accept it as history, and we soon perceive that its purpose is to glorify Samuel, the seer. He receives revelations from his god even about trifling details, such as the safe return of the asses that Kish had lost, and the pro-

[1] After an amended version. [2] 1 Samuel xix. 24. [3] See pp. 448, 449

visions carried by certain pilgrims who met Saul. If we ask how Saul became king, the only answer given us is that Samuel, by command of his god, anointed him, and that Yahweh confirmed the act by a number of signs, and by sending his spirit upon Saul to make him prophesy. But we cannot rest satisfied for a moment with such an answer. In itself it is incredible, and the sequel of the history makes it repugnant to our moral sense. For hardly had Saul, by dint of all this miraculous guidance and divine revelation, ascended the throne, when he was rejected by this same Samuel as not being a king after Yahweh's heart. What a host of miracles all for nothing!

This narrative, then, does not help us much in our attempt to answer the questions: How was the monarchy established in Israel? and, Why was Saul chosen king? Let us see whether a second account throws any more light on the subject.

This second story runs as follows[1]:—

When Samuel had grown too old to perform in person all his duties as judge, he appointed his sons Joel and Abiah to be his assistants. But these unworthy sons of a noble father accepted bribes and pronounced unjust sentences. In grief and anger the elders of the Israelites came to Samuel at Ramah and begged him to appoint a king, in accordance with the custom of all the surrounding nations, since he himself was now so old and his sons behaved so wickedly.

Samuel took the request very ill. What! Was this the reward of all his faithful services to his people? He prayed, in his deep depression, to Yahweh, and his god acknowledged the justice of his complaint, but reminded him that the Israelites did but treat him with the same ingratitude they manifested towards their god. Ever since they had come out of Egypt they had shown their rebellious spirit by neglecting the worship of Yahweh, and serving other gods; and even now it was not Samuel so much as Yahweh, their lawful king, whom they rejected. Samuel was to yield to their request, however, but not until he had warned them what treatment they had to expect from a king, that they might know what they were doing.

Samuel brought Yahweh's answer to the representatives of his people, and told them distinctly what a heavy yoke they were laying on their necks in asking for a king. The monarch would take their sons to form a mounted bodyguard and to

[1] 1 Samuel viii., x. 17–27, xi.-xii.

man his war-chariots. He would press into his service all that were capable of bearing arms, would choose his officers of all ranks from amongst them, and would set others to plough his lands, to reap his harvests, and to manufacture implements and chariots of war. Even their daughters would be required for his court, to serve as ointment makers, confectioners, and bakers. When they had a king, they would never know what to call their own; for when the fancy took him he would seize their choicest fields, vine-hills, or olive gardens, and give them to his favorites. He would demand tithes of all the produce of their lands and trees to pay his chamberlains and other servants. He would seize his people's slaves, cattle and asses, and make them work for him, and would exact tithes of their sheep and goats. In a word, they would be the monarch's slaves. "And when," said Samuel in conclusion, "you are oppressed by the king you have chosen for yourselves, you will cry to Yahweh for help; but he will not give ear to your cry."

Thus did Samuel attempt to dissuade the people; but they had set their hearts upon having a king, and answered, "Come what may, we will not be left behind by the other nations! They are all governed by kings, and we will have one too. He shall judge us, and go out before us to war." Disappointed to find that his countrymen could not be shaken in their determination, Samuel laid their answer before Yahweh, and was ordered by him to fulfil their wish. Upon this he dismissed the elders with a promise to make the needful preparations.

Samuel soon redeemed his promise, and summoned a popular assembly at the sanctuary of Yahweh, at Mizpeh. Here he distinctly warned the people again that their desire to be ruled by a king was a violation of their duty towards Yahweh, who had always delivered them in times of need. After this he went on to choose a king by lot. The lot first pointed to the tribe of Benjamin, and then to the family of Matri; till finally it appeared that Saul, the son of Kish, was the man chosen by Yahweh. He was quite unknown to those present, and they were obliged to apply to a priest or seer to learn of Yahweh himself whether Saul would appear in the assembly. "He will," was the divine response. "He is even now amongst the baggage." Search was made immediately, and there, sure enough, Saul was found. He was led into the midst of the people, and behold he was a head taller than any one of them. Truly Yahweh, who sees in secret, had

found a goodly man! "This," cried Samuel, "is the chosen of Yahweh! There is none like him among all the people;" and a great cry rose, "Long live the king!"

Then Samuel told the people what the rights of the crown were to be. He wrote them all down himself, and placed the document in the sanctuary; after which he dismissed the assembly.

Upon this every one returned to his house, and Saul to his abode in Gibeah. The king did not return alone, however, for he was accompanied by certain righteous men whose hearts God had touched, so that they joined themselves to him at once. But it was not every one that was so well disposed. There were certain good-for-nothing fellows, sons of Belial, who asked contemptuously, "What! Is this to be our deliverer?" and refused to offer him any presents.

Now about a month afterwards,[1] Nahash, king of the Ammonites, came and laid siege to Jabesh, in Gilead. The inhabitants of the city, feeling that they were no match for him, were compelled to enter into negotiations, and promised to submit to him. Nahash was willing to spare their lives, but only on condition that he might put out their right eyes as an insult to all Israel. The elders of Israel begged for seven days' respite, and at once sent messengers to every quarter of the land of Israel to pray for help. The sad news of the men of Jabesh spread horror and amazement everywhere; weeping and lamentations answered them on every side, but no help seemed to be forthcoming. At last the Gileadites came to Gibeah, where Saul was dwelling. Here, as elsewhere, they delivered their dread message, and appealed to their brothers for help. It was not in vain this time; for while all who had heard the news were filling the air with their lamentations, a certain man approached, driving his oxen home from the plough. It was Saul. He perceived the signs of general distress, asked the cause, and soon learned the news which the Gileadites had brought. The moment he heard it he was seized by the spirit of God. Burning with indignation, he hewed his two oxen into pieces on the spot, and sent messengers to bear the reeking fragments throughout the land. The threat resounded on every side: "Thus shall it be done to the oxen of every man who comes not out to follow Saul and Samuel." Then the fear of Yahweh fell upon the people, and they gathered like one man around their bold leader, who soon found himself at the head of three hundred thousand

[1] After an amended version.

men of Israel and thirty thousand men of Judah, assembled at Bezek. He could confidently promise the messengers from Jabesh that he would come the next day and relieve the city. We can imagine with what joy the news was received at Jabesh. To ensure the success of the expedition the inhabitants threw Nahash off his guard by promising to surrender the city on the following day; but that very night Saul divided his troops into three companies, broke into the middle of the Ammonite camp towards morning, put to flight the enemy, and scattered and pursued them till no two of them were left together.

Then the sons of Belial, who had refused to acknowledge Saul, were ready enough to withdraw their opposition; for the people declared themselves unanimously in his favor, and even desired to put all those to death who had at first opposed him. But Saul himself defended them, and declared, "Not a creature shall be put to death this day, for Yahweh has delivered Israel."

The time had now arrived for doing solemn homage to the chosen prince. So Samuel called the people together at Gilgal, and there, amidst sacrifices and shouts of triumph, Saul was proclaimed king before the face of Yahweh. Then Samuel addressed the people: "Behold," he said, "I have done as you desired in everything, and have given you a king. There he stands before you! I am old and gray-headed, and I have spent all my life amongst you; and now I call upon you all, in Yahweh's presence, to bear witness against me. Say, have I taken any man's ox or ass? Have I oppressed or wronged any one of you? Have I ever been bribed by any man? If so, then I will return what I have gained unjustly." Voices rose on every side to acquit him of any such charges, and to sound his praise in all things. Then he began again: "Yahweh and his anointed king are witnesses that you have found no kind of fault in me." "So be it!" answered they. "Then," continued he, "let me pronounce your sentence in the presence of Yahweh. He has done great things for you. He has helped you from the time when Jacob went down to Egypt; he sent you Moses and Aaron; he led your fathers out of Egypt, and caused them to settle here. But when they forgot Yahweh, he sold them to Sisera, and afterwards to the Philistines and the Moabites. Then, when they called upon him again, confessed their sin, returned to him, and promised that they would serve him if he would but rescue them, he sent them deliverers one after another — Jerubbaal, Abdon, Jephthah, or Samson. Thus was peace restored. But

when you saw that Nahash, king of the Ammonites, was coming up against you, in spite of all these proofs of the faithfulness and power of your god, you were afraid and desired a king, though your true king was Yahweh. And there stands the man whom you have chosen! Yahweh has given you a king. If you obey your god henceforth, you shall live, and he will bless you; but if not, Yahweh's hand shall lie heavily upon you and upon your ruler. But that you may all know full well that you have committed a great sin in asking for a king, Yahweh will send rain and thunder this day, although it is the time of wheat harvest." Having spoken thus, Samuel raised his hands to heaven, and at once the thunder rolled and the rain came down in torrents. Then great fear of Yahweh and of Samuel fell upon the Israelites, and they humbly implored the man of God to pray for them, and preserve them from destruction, confessing, at the same time, that they had sinned in asking for a king. Samuel put their fears to rest, and again exhorted them never to neglect the service of Yahweh, or to worship the impotent idols who could not deliver them. At the same time, he assured them that since Yahweh had, once for all, chosen Israel as his heritage, he would never reject his people, lest his glory should be tarnished. Then he gave them the comforting assurance, "Be it far from me to sin against Yahweh by ceasing to pray for you! No, I will still serve Yahweh, and will still show you the right and true way;" after which he concluded by repeating yet again the exhortation: "Only fear Yahweh, and serve him in integrity with all your heart. For you see what a marvellous sign he has wrought this day. If you do evil, both you and your king shall perish."

This story is wonderfully self-contradictory. In one place fear of Nahash is mentioned[1] as the cause of the people's desire for a king. But how does this accord with the subsequent events? The people, terrified by the approach of Nahash, demand a king. Samuel calls a general assembly in which Saul is proclaimed king. But yet he goes home quite quietly and does nothing for a whole month. Then we discover again that Nahash is coming to besiege Jabesh. The inhabitants of the city are not at all aware that there is a king in Israel, for they send messengers throughout all the land. Saul casually hears of the affair, and at once God's spirit comes over him. We are left in complete ignorance as

[1] 1 Samuel xii. 12.

to what had become of the men who were moved by God to accompany him. And yet the story of Saul's victory over the Ammonites, and that of his election by lot, form parts of a single whole. The connection between them, in the mind of the writer, appears to have been something as follows: When Saul had been chosen by lot, he had still to show by his deeds that he really was the man to deliver Israel. It was not till after his victory that the voice of opposition died away and he could receive public homage. Such was the writer's own idea. But a careful examination of his story convinces us that he found the account of Saul's triumph over Nahash already in existence, and merely worked it into his own narrative. This account, indeed, rests upon a tradition, the main features of which are thoroughly historical. We shall return to this old tradition presently, but must first dwell on the other portions of the narrative, which are pure inventions.

A little careful consideration reveals their unhistorical nature.

We have already observed, in the last chapter, that it is a mistake to represent Samuel as a warrior, who humbled the Philistines; on the contrary, he attempted to improve the miserable condition to which the country had been reduced, by such moral means as raising the religious life of his people, and quickening their zeal for Yahweh and his people; and it was the utter failure of these efforts that induced the people to adopt the monarchical form of government. But in this, as in several other stories, the true position of affairs is completely ignored. The demand of the Israelites for a king is not made to rest upon any reasonable grounds. The condition of the country appears to be all that could be desired. The fear of Nahash, the prince of the Ammonites, is indeed just mentioned, but is not considered even a reasonable excuse, still less a sufficient reason for the desire for a change. The misgovernment of Samuel's sons might of course be the occasion, but it could not be the cause of the people's wish for a king. For these unjust judges might have been deposed, and how could any one tell that a king would be any more impartial than a judge? The only other reason given for the wish is the fact that other nations had kings. But surely this is not enough. Is it possible that the whole people — for they seem to have been unanimous in the matter — should have desired, for such frivolous reasons, a change which would affect their lives so profoundly, and would even reduce them to slavery? They accepted undoubtingly the appalling picture drawn by

Samuel of what they would suffer at the hands of a king, and yet persisted in their wish to have one. The writer's idea seems to be that the Israelites asked for a king under the influence of some perverse and sinful whim, or at most of a sudden dread of Nahash. But such a supposition is absurd.

And then how extraordinarily submissive to Samuel the Israelites are! They come to him and ask him for a king, and then take no further action whatever. Samuel manages everything himself, and gives his people a ruler. Where can a second example of such submission to a prophet be found? Surely Samuel had no reason to complain that the people had rejected him. The attitude of the people towards Samuel is quite incredible; and so is their method of choosing a king, by casting lots. The result is the selection of a man who is entirely unknown, and who had not the least idea himself of the possibility of his being appointed; for we are not to suppose that his being absent amongst the baggage was the result of modesty. It was purely accidental. Imagine a nation choosing a king by lot! What reason could there be for such an extravagant proceeding? They can hardly have thought that one man was as fit to be king as another. At any rate, they would not have liked to have one of Samuel's sons, for instance, as their prince. Did they act from a religious feeling, then, thinking that Yahweh would thus point out the most suitable man? This is certainly the meaning of the narrative. The unknown Saul, we are to believe, with his bold demeanor and imposing stature, was definitely selected by Yahweh, who caused the lot to fall to him, and then indicated where he was to be found. All this was far from incredible to an Israelite who believed that "the lot is cast into the bosom, but the result is ruled by Yahweh."[1] Indeed it was quite in the spirit of antiquity and of people who believed in presages, soothsaying, and supernatural revelations of the deity, to leave the decision of important questions to the lot, or some other chance indication.[2] Thus the legend tells us that Darius Hystaspes was chosen king of Persia because, when the pretenders to the throne met by agreement, his horse was the first to neigh. But however religious these actions may have appeared in ancient times, I very much doubt whether any sensible man ever adopted such a method of deciding an important question, unless he had first exhausted all other means of coming to a decision. It

[1] Proverbs xvi. 33. [2] See pp. 158–161.

is only fanatics who do such things. If the Israelites in Samuel's time allowed the man of God to choose them a king by lot, then surely Yahweh had as little cause as Samuel to complain of the people's apostasy and disobedience.

And then what a gloomy commencement for the monarchy in Israel! Samuel, while solemnly conferring authority upon Saul, makes a speech in which he reproaches the people with their sins, and which a miraculous thunder-storm renders doubly impressive. On this the people confess their guilt. They have sinned in asking for a king. But, if they really mean it, what is to prevent them from retracing their evil steps? The way is still open for a return. The confession of a sin coupled with its continuance is little better than hypocrisy. And yet not only Samuel, but Yahweh himself who commands the thunder-storm, accepts the confession as a sufficient sign of repentance. The whole story is obviously legendary.

But in one respect this fiction represents the fact; for it is true that the monarchical form of government was not introduced into Israel without opposition. In our story Samuel stands alone in his opposition; but in reality many Israelites had the strongest objection to the monarchy. This aversion is clearly reflected in the so-called fable of Jotham. It appears in the book of Judges out of its proper connection,[1] though in all probability it does really date from the period of the judges or possibly from that of Saul. At any rate it admirably describes the feelings of the party that opposed the monarchy in the interests of freedom. It runs as follows[2]: —

Once on a time, the trees came out to anoint a king. First they went to the olive, and cried to him: "Come, and be our king!" But the olive answered: "Shall I leave the oil for which gods and men honor me, and go to wave my branches over the trees?" After this ignominious repulse, the trees went with the same request to the fig-tree. But he, too, preferred his sweet and precious fruit to the empty honors of royalty. Then they tried the vine. But he, too, refused to entertain their offer for a moment, and answered: "Shall I leave the wine that makes gods and men rejoice to exercise lordship over the trees? Not I!" Quite at a loss what to do next, the trees at last, by common consent, turned to the bramble-bush, and offered him the crown. He was greatly pleased by the honor, and said with an impor-

[1] See p. 395. [2] Judges ix. 8–15.

tant air: "If you really anoint me king in good faith, then you may come and rest under my shadow. But if not, then let fire come out of the bramble-bush and consume the very cedars of Lebanon themselves!"

What contempt for the monarchy this fable breathes! A noble tree has no desire to be king, but thinks itself too good for such an office. It is only the bramble-bush, that has nothing to lose and can do nothing better, that consents to be crowned.

We can easily understand this opposition to the monarchy; for the account of a royal court put into the mouth of Samuel was drawn from the life. Kings exacted constant service, heaped capricious favors on their courtiers, dealt with the property and the persons of their subjects just as they chose, kept luxurious courts and surrounded themselves with guards. In a word they were despots, and their people were slaves. Such was monarchy in these ancient times. Our "constitutions," with their more or less elaborate regulation of the mutual rights and duties of prince and people, were as yet unknown. The power of the king was unlimited.[1] We do indeed read that Samuel publicly announced the rights of the monarchy and even reduced them to writing;[2] but all this was certainly nothing more than, at most, an exhortation addressed to the king. He was bound by nothing but his own conscience and public opinion, fear of tumult or the desire to win the love of his people. A nation, therefore, that chose a king surrendered its own liberty, and it is not surprising that Israel long refused to throw itself upon the mercy of a single ruler. It was not till the weakness caused by division absolutely compelled them to find some centre of union that the Israelites chose a king. A nation without a king was but a certain number of disconnected families, clans or tribes; a nation under a king was a united and powerful whole.

One of the writers of the book of Judges shows a warm appreciation of the regal form of government; for he tries to explain the confusion of the period before Saul, by saying,[3] "There was no king in Israel then;" and sometimes he adds,[4] "Every one did what he pleased." In Samuel's days there were many Israelites who noticed the comparative quiet that reigned in other lands under the government of a king, and contrasted it with the divisions and dissensions that were

[1] Compare pp. 231–234.
[2] 1 Samuel x. 25.
[3] Judges xviii. 1, xix. 1.
[4] Judges xvii. 6, xxi. 25.

always disturbing the peace of their own. They envied the decision and efficiency with which these other nations were able to take the field against their foes, and the unity and strength they enjoyed under their kings, and they too desired to enjoy the same privileges.

But the Israelites were not united on this point. We may be sure that many a proud and independent spirit would hesitate to submit to the restrictions of a monarchy, and would only yield to the force of public opinion. Samuel, too, and his friends the prophets were probably opposed to the appointment of a king, for reasons which we can easily guess. We have seen[1] that the means by which the prophets themselves sought to deliver Israel were very different from a change in the form of government, and consisted in various measures of what they regarded as moral reformation. When a man is engaged in such a work as this, he is, of course, never satisfied, for there is always room enough for improvement left. It is difficult therefore to convince him that success cannot be obtained by his methods, for he still hopes that if only every one would really be virtuous the day of deliverance would come. We see the same kind of thing still. When a great calamity, such as a cattle-plague, or an epidemic of small-pox or typhus, threatens or afflicts a nation, a certain set of people always cry out that the disaster may be turned aside by repentance and prayer. These men are seldom warm promoters of sanitary precautions, such as vaccination or cleansing dwelling-places, and so checking the spread of disease; for they place all their reliance upon the miraculous and immediate help of God. In the same way Samuel and most of the prophets, doubtless, opposed the appointment of a king of Israel, because they looked upon it as a sign of want of faith in the power of their god. Surely he could rescue his people, and was ready to do so if they would but serve him with a perfect heart.

And now let us ask ourselves what was the real course of events. For a satisfactory answer we must turn to the account of Saul's triumph over the Ammonites.

The details of this exploit are not all correctly recorded. It certainly is not true, for instance, that when Saul called upon the Israelites to gather round him, he associated Samuel's name with his own. This touch was added by the later writer, who inserts the old tradition into his narrative,

[1] See pp. 457, 458.

but makes Samuel prominent throughout. There are other things in the story which we cannot possibly accept as true. The good nature of the Ammonites in granting the besieged a respite of seven days for the express purpose of enabling them to send to their brethren for help is surely without a parallel. And what an incredible amount is accomplished within a single week! The envoys cross the Jordan, traverse the country, and come to Gibeah. Saul sends messengers throughout the land to call all the men of military age to battle. An army of a hundred thousand strong is got into marching order, and seven days after the messengers left Jabesh the army of the Ammonites is defeated! Even in these days of telegraphs and railways no monarch could bring an army into the field and engage in battle at so short a notice. It is inconceivable that so numerous an army should have been able to cross the Jordan and reach Jabesh in a single day; but it is still more impossible that it should have penetrated the enemy's camp unobserved by night. It is as if the Ammonites had made all their arrangements with a special view to being routed. But though the truth has been greatly embellished and distorted, no doubt the main facts of the story are historical, and they are confirmed by the gratitude shown to Saul, even after his death, by the Gileadites, and more especially by the men of Jabesh. We may take it as a fact, then, that Saul delivered Jabesh from the power of the Ammonites, and was made king in consequence.

We may now sum up our conclusions in a few words.

When the sons of Israel and their allies penetrated into Canaan they knew no form of government except the so-called patriarchal rule. That is to say, the head of the household ruled his children and his slaves. Since the sons of one household generally preferred to keep near each other even after they were married, and the members of the family had many interests in common, it generally happened that each clan, almost without intending it, had a special leader. The eldest brother was the natural occupant of this position, but sometimes a younger member became the head of the family, in virtue of his superior ability or for some other reason. Sometimes, when special circumstances demanded it, larger sections — a whole tribe or even several tribes — gathered under the banner of a single man, but only to fall apart again as soon as the object of their temporary alliance was accomplished. These loose and undefined relations to

each other did well enough for a number of wandering tribes, but were by no means sufficient for the different sections of a single nation that had acquired a settled territory. There were no judges, there was no one to see to the public safety. Every one had to look after himself. No one undertook what the general interest demanded. Feuds between private individuals, villages, or clans dragged on and on because there was no recognized authority to decide the quarrels and compel the disputants to make up their differences and live at peace. This state of things could not go on for ever, and attempts were naturally made to put an end to it, especially when foreign foes threatened the independence of the nation. Such was Israel's condition during the period of the judges. Now and then we see some such power established as that of Jephthah in Gilead, or of Abimelech in Shechem and the neighborhood, but never with any permanent result. The tribes were still too fond of freedom, and the danger was not yet pressing enough. But gradually it became clear that the tribes would be swallowed up unless they joined hands and elected a single chief to be their supreme judge in times of peace and their commander in times of war.

In Samuel's time the danger was most threatening. The Philistines were masters of the greater part of the land. The Ammonites were developing a formidable power to the east. The religious revival that had expressed itself in the rise of the prophets and the Nazarites, no doubt directed the thoughts of the Israelites to the delivering might of Yahweh, and so diverted their attention in many cases from all earthly means of salvation; but at the same time it strengthened the separate tribes in the feeling that they were all members of one and the same nation, and in this way it indirectly prepared them for united action. Israel was therefore ripe for union under the banner of a single ruler. A great victory over the Ammonites brought Saul into prominence. A leader was wanted to take the field against the Philistines, and as the victorious troops returned from Jabesh, they raised Saul upon a shield, and shouted "Long live the king!" The prophets, carried away by the general enthusiasm, anointed the successful warrior, and proclaimed him the chosen of Yahweh, or at any rate kept silence, despairing of their power to resist the mighty stream, and hoping the best of the powerful ruler who now held sway over Yahweh's heritage.

Chapter XXV.

SAUL DELIVERS ISRAEL.

1 Samuel XIII. and XIV.

WE do not know how old Saul was when he gained his victory over the Ammonites, and was proclaimed king by the people. The narrative we are to examine next begins with the words: "Saul was . . . years[1] old when he became king, and he reigned two years over Israel." The number before "years" is wanting. One of the stories, as we have seen, represents Saul as a mere lad, sent out by his father to look for some stray asses, and causing him great anxiety by his protracted absence; but in reality he was a man of at least middle age, for at the very beginning of his reign his son Jonathan was a full-grown man — one of the most valiant of the Israelite heroes, and entrusted by his father with an important command.

Now that he was anointed king, Saul availed himself of his authority at once. Instead of disbanding all the troops with which he had relieved Jabesh, he kept three thousand of them under arms about him. For Nahash was not the only foe that the Israelites had to fear, nor indeed the principal one. The Philistines were their great oppressors. The whole of Canaan this side the Jordan was in their power. Some parts of the Israelite territory were treated so completely as Philistine provinces that many of the inhabitants were forced to serve in the Philistine armies. Indeed, the Israelites were brought so low that all the smiths (who were probably not very numerous) were carried away out of the land, at any rate if they attempted to settle anywhere near the Philistine cities. The object of this measure was to prevent the Israelites obtaining swords or steel spears. Even when their ploughs, spades, bill-hooks, or scythes required sharpening, they had to take them to be done by the Philistines, who made them pay a good round price — three shekels for each implement.[1] It need hardly be said that Saul's thoughts turned at once to these Philistines, and that he watched for an opportunity of attacking them. For the present, therefore, he kept two thousand warriors about himself,

[1] After an amended version.

encamped in two divisions at Michmash and Bethel, while he gave Jonathan command of a thousand more whose quarters were at Gibeah.

There, at Gibeah, the Philistines had set up a trophy of war,[1] that vexed the soul of every good Israelite who saw it. But woe to the man who should dare to throw it down! It would be regarded as a declaration of war. Not long after the defeat of Nahash, the report spread like fire through the land of Israel that Saul had thrown down this triumphal monument of the Philistines, and so given the sign for insurrection. The report was true. Jonathan, at his father's command, had overthrown the trophy; and now heralds, despatched by Saul, traversed the land in every direction, trumpet in hand. In every city or village through which they passed they blew the horn and cried, "Let the Hebrews rise and fight!"[1] proclaiming to all who heard them that Saul had summoned every man who could bear arms to battle.

Meanwhile, of course, the Philistines were not idle. They had hardly heard that the Hebrews had laid presumptuous hands upon their triumphal column before they seized their arms to punish such audacity and quell the insurrection. At Michmash, south-east of Beth-horon,[1] a prodigious army soon assembled. There were a thousand[1] chariots, six thousand horsemen, and a countless host of foot soldiers. Then terror fell upon the hearts of the Israelites. Many of them fled back from the camp;[1] some concealed themselves among the thickets of densely-wooded districts, others hid their wives and children in caves, and some even fled with their families across the Jordan to the land of the Gadites and Gileadites. Thus the district which was first exposed to the vengeance of the Philistines was almost depopulated. Saul's army melted away till there were but six hundred warriors left, and even they were so badly armed that not one of them, except Saul and Jonathan, possessed a sword or a lance. The others were at best armed only with clubs, stones, bill-hooks, slings, bows and arrows without metal heads. What could Saul do with such troops against all the well-armed warriors of the Philistines? And yet it was no fool-hardiness that kept him so near the enemy, for between Michmash and Gibeah there was a mountain pass, the sides of which were so abrupt that even a small band could hold the position against a vastly superior power. The Philistines, however, availed themselves of their numbers to devastate the country. Their picked battalion,

[1] After an amended version.

known as "the destroyer," was separated into three divisions, each of which took a different road, and destroyed everything it could lay hold of. The Philistines hoped by this means to draw the Israelites from their impregnable position. Meanwhile the main army remained at Michmash, with its outposts stationed at the mountain pass.

Saul's headquarters were at some little distance from the pass, in the direction of Gibeah, at the pomegranate tree. Tradition long pointed out the very spot. Here he was surrounded by his six hundred men, and Ahiah, the son of Ahitub, the brother of Eli's grandson Ichabod,[1] "bore the *ephod:*" that is to say, consulted Yahweh for him. One day Jonathan had wandered away from the headquarters without his father's knowledge, and accompanied by no one but his armor-bearer. Presently he came to a rock called Bozez, from which he could see certain Philistine warriors standing on a higher rock right opposite, called Seneh. The sight was more than he could bear. His blood boiled. "Shall we fall upon these uncircumcised?" he cried indignantly, as he turned to his companion. "It is as easy for Yahweh to give the victory to few as to many!" His armor-bearer declared that he was perfectly ready to follow him. But would Yahweh help them? Was it his will that they should undertake this desperate adventure? This was the only question they need ask, and Jonathan knew how to find the answer. "Let us stand where those fellows can see us," he said to his attendant, "and if they say 'Wait till we come to you!' then we will stay here; but if they say 'Come up here if you dare! we'll teach you who you are!' then we will take them at their word, for it will be a sign that Yahweh has given them into our hands." Upon this they came out into the sight of the Philistines, who greeted them with a shout of contemptuous laughter the moment they saw them. "Only look," they cried, "here are the Hebrews creeping out of their holes! Come up here, and we'll teach you who you are!" "Follow me!" cried Jonathan to his companion, "for Yahweh has given the Philistines into the hand of Israel!" And to the amazement of the Philistines, the bold warrior, followed by his armor-bearer, began scrambling up the slope on his hands and knees. Terror seized the Philistines. They gazed in breathless amazement at their desperate assailants, and were too completely stupefied to strike them down as they crept towards them. Before they had recovered their

[1] See pp. 441, 442.

senses the two were upon them. Jonathan had already struck down several of their number, while his armor-bearer followed him and made sure his work. Thus, twenty of them fell under the hero's arrows and stones.[1] The panic spread. It seized the whole army, not only the ill-armed and ill-organized mass that generally constituted the bulk of an ancient army, but the chosen troops themselves. The earth trembled. It was a "panic of God." The flight was universal.

Saul's watchmen observed the commotion, and reported it to their prince. He was not a little surprised, and gave orders at once that search should be made to see whether any of his warriors were absent. The truth was soon discovered. Jonathan and his armor-bearer were nowhere to be found. Ahiah was sent for without loss of time, and he soon stood with his *ephod*[1] before Saul ready to consult Yahweh. Saul asked him whether he should attack the Philistines or remain in his own camp. Meanwhile the army of the Philistines broke into general and open flight. "Hold," cried Saul to the priest, "no need to consult Yahweh now!" "To arms!" they shout on every side, as they rush upon the foe. The Philistines are beside themselves with terror. Believing themselves to be betrayed they turn their weapons upon each other, unable in their panic fear to distinguish friend from foe, and all is utter confusion!

The fate of the Philistine army was soon decided. The slaves[1] who had been compelled to serve in it now took the side of Saul and Jonathan. The Israelites who had hidden in Mount Ephraim, in the rear of the hostile army, came out at the news of the defeat and fell upon the foe from every side. Saul's band of six hundred soon swelled to ten thousand, and the flying enemy was followed with unwearying persistence into every corner of Mount Ephraim.

But now Saul made a great mistake.[1] He feared that his people, many of whom no doubt had tasted but little food during the last few days, might lag behind in the pursuit, and stay to eat the provisions that fell into their hands, so he cried aloud, "A curse upon the man who tastes food before the evening, or who eats anything till the measure of my vengeance on my foes is full!" So every one fasted, and even when the warriors came to a thicket where honey was dropping on every side they dare not so much as taste it, for fear of the curse.

[1] After an amended version.

But Jonathan had not heard his father's oath, and as he was faint with hunger, he plunged his stick into the honey as he hastened past and tasted it. He was told at once by one of the soldiers what his father had said; but he did not at all approve of it. He was naturally vexed to see that the fruits of his heroism would not be so rich as he had hoped, and as they might have been. "My father," he said, "is spoiling everything! Look how my eyes have been cleared by just tasting this honey! What a glorious day this would be if every one might eat freely what he could find, for they are all weak and exhausted for want of food. We shall have but a paltry victory after all."

At last the evening came. The Israelites had pursued the Philistines to Ajalon, and now they could go no further. Their hands were full of booty, including a number of oxen, sheep, and calves. Nothing could have been more welcome under the special circumstances. The sharp tooth of hunger drove them to a course from which they would otherwise have shrunk. To slaughter the cattle in the usual manner would have taken too long, especially as they had no metal weapons, so they dashed the animals upon the ground, tore off pieces of the flesh and devoured it, blood and all.[1] This was a sin against Yahweh, and as such it roused the indignation of Saul to the utmost. As soon as he heard what was going on he did all that could be done to put an end to it. He ordered his immediate followers to bring him a huge stone, and then go round amongst the scattered groups of the people and tell them to bring their cattle there to be slaughtered. The people obeyed. Every one brought his prize to the spot. Saul devoted himself to slaughtering the animals for his people upon the stone he had set up for the purpose, taking care that in every case the blood should flow off properly. He afterwards dedicated the stone, all deluged with blood, as an altar to Yahweh. This was the first altar he raised.

When the hungry soldiers were satisfied, and were therefore in a condition to pursue the enemy still further, as the smoke of the sacrifice rose into the air from the newly-erected altar, Saul's warlike zeal broke forth again with new strength. "Come," he cried to his warriors, "let us spend the whole night in pursuing the Philistines! Let us plunder them till morning breaks; not one of them must be left alive!" Many of his wearied followers must have longed for a good night's rest, after such a trying day and such a hurried meal; but be

[1] See p. 86.

this as it may, they all declared themselves ready for the pursuit. The priest, however, who had offered the sacrifice now interposed, and recommended Saul to consult the deity before undertaking a further pursuit. The prince, full of reverence for Yahweh, at once assented; and when the priest had put on his *ephod*, Saul asked, "Am I to pursue the Philistines?"

Our knowledge of the way in which an Israelite priest of those days consulted his god is far from complete. The apparatus he used was probably concealed in the *ephod*, and was called either *Urim* alone, or more fully *Urim* and *Thummim;* that is, *light* and *truth*. It consisted, at any rate in part, of some kind of apparatus for casting lots. We shall presently give an account of its employment, which is not to be found in our authorized version, however, since the text from which it is taken is restored from the Greek and Latin translations. We shall see from this account that if the question put to the deity admitted of but two answers, the person consulting the oracle might say, Give *Urim* in the one case and *Thummim* in the other. We know that the divining apparatus of a certain Arab tribe consists of two arrows, upon one of which is written "Yes," and upon the other "No." But the *Urim* and *Thummim* cannot have been anything exactly like this, for in that case a definite answer of some sort must always have been obtained. But this was not so with the Israelites. Sometimes Yahweh gave no answer at all by the *Urim*. How this appeared we cannot tell.

On the occasion of which we are speaking this very thing happened. When Saul asked whether he was to continue the pursuit, Yahweh kept silence and refused to give an answer. This was certainly a sign of anger. Saul was much disturbed, and immediately summoned all the troops. "A sin has been committed," he cried, "and therefore Yahweh will not answer me. The guilty man must be discovered; and though it be my son Jonathan himself, yet as sure as Yahweh lives he shall be put to death!" A shudder ran through every frame to think that the dreaded Yahweh was wroth, and that no man knew the cause! The bravest heart beat fast. What sacrifice would the stern god demand? Who was not conscious of some sin? Just now, for instance, they had eaten blood. Could that be the cause of Yahweh's wrath? And then the fearful oath of Saul, the zealot, the devoted worshipper of Yahweh! He was not the man to break his vow. A stillness as of death followed the monarch's words.

To show that he was thoroughly in earnest, Saul took his

stand with Jonathan, over against the people and said, "We will ask Yahweh whether the guilty man is one of us two or one of you!" The people tremblingly assented, and Saul went on. "O Yahweh, God of Israel! Why hast thou not answered thy servant? If I or my son Jonathan have sinned, then give *Urim;* and if the guilty one is among the people, then give *Thummim!*"[1] Then the lots were cast, and Yahweh acquitted the people, and declared that the guilt lay with Saul or with his son. Then the king said, "We two will cast lots, and he upon whom the lot falls shall die." "Never! never!" cried the people in horror; but Saul persisted.[1] The lots were cast between himself and his son, and the lot fell upon Jonathan. The guilty man was now discovered, and Saul turned to him and exclaimed, "My son, confess your guilt. What is it you have done?" Then Jonathan remembered what had taken place a few hours before, and felt convinced that it was he who had caused the wrath of Yahweh. "As we were pursuing the enemy," he said, "I put a little honey to my mouth with the end of my stick. Thus did I break your oath; and now I am ready to die for it." It was all clear now. Saul had discovered the cause of Yahweh's wrath, and however deeply moved at the thought of losing his son, he was ready to sacrifice his feelings as a father to the demands of his faith. "May God requite me," he cried, "if you do not die this very day!"[1] But here the people interposed. "What! Jonathan to be put to death! The hero to whom we owe this mighty victory!" "Never! never! As sure as Yahweh lives, not a hair of his head shall be touched!" they cried on every side. Saul's chief men threw themselves between the fanatical monarch and his son. Half convinced, half overpowered, at last he relinquished his design, and a ransom was paid for Jonathan. We are not told what this ransom was. It may have been a certain number of prisoners of war, or a great herd of cattle and sheep. But the sacrifice offered in the place of the offender must certainly have been a costly one, or it could not in any degree have satisfied the conscience of Saul. Thus Jonathan's life was spared.

Meanwhile the idea of pursuing the Philistines that night had been given up, and they were allowed to escape to their own country. But this great victory had confirmed Saul on the throne of Israel. As king of Israel, Saul waged many wars to defend his people from the oppression of their neigh-

[1] After an amended version.

bors on every side; and in whatever direction he turned his arms he was always victorious. The Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, the kings of Zobah, in fact all the peoples upon Israel's eastern border, were humbled by him. The Philistines could not stand before him. He even collected a great army, with which he so crippled the Amalekites and other robber tribes of the south, that they were compelled to desist from their constant incursions into Canaan.

As to his family affairs we are told that he had four sons — Jonathan, Abinadab, Melchishuah, and Ishbaal or Ishbosheth[1] — and two daughters, Merab and Michal, by his wife Ahinoam. His commander-in-chief was Abner, who was his cousin; for Ner, Abner's father, and Kish, the father of Saul, were brothers, sons of Abiel.[2]

This account, which appears to be very trustworthy, has been preserved by the same writer who told us how Samuel anointed Saul at Ramah.[3] He certainly derived it from some earlier authority, but he did not hand it down unaltered. On the other hand he inserted a passage towards the beginning of the account which introduces such confusion into the narrative itself, and makes Saul's character appear so extraordinary, that I have left it out. When telling us how Saul was anointed king, this writer made Samuel say: "You must wait for me seven days at Gilgal, till I join you there and offer the sacrifices and tell you what to do."[4] It is to this injunction that the writer now refers us back. He makes Saul summon the people to Gilgal,[5] and then goes on as follows[6]: —

In obedience to the seer's words Saul waited at Gilgal. How he longed to advance at once against the Philistines! But he curbed his impetuous desire. At last the seventh day broke, but no Samuel appeared. The army was melting away hour by hour. Nothing but some bold and decisive step such as an order to march against the enemy could prevent his being deserted by all his troops. But he could not issue any such order before the solemn sacrifice had been offered, and who knew whether the Philistines might not attack him at Gilgal before the ceremony was performed? The day drew to a close, and Samuel was still absent. At last Saul could bear it no longer. He had all the preparations made, and then offered the burnt sacrifice himself. Hardly had he done so when Samuel was seen approaching.

[1] See p. 392.
[2] After an amended version.
[3] 1 Samuel ix. 1–x. 16.
[4] 1 Samuel x. 8.
[5] 1 Samuel xiii. 4.
[6] Vv. 7b–15a.

Saul advanced respectfully to greet the seer, but Samuel sternly required him to answer for what he had done. Saul told him how it had happened. "The people were melting away," he said, "and you came not at the appointed time. The Philistines are encamped at Michmash, and I was afraid that they might attack me and compel me to join battle with them before I had called upon Yahweh. And so I took courage to offer the sacrifice myself." But Samuel would accept no excuse. "You have done ill," he replied, "for you have not obeyed the commandment of Yahweh, your god. Had you obeyed, then Yahweh would have confirmed your rule over Israel this day; but now your power shall not endure, and Yahweh will seek out a man after his own heart to take your place and to be the prince of his people." With these words the seer left Gilgal and departed to Gibeah in Benjamin.

It is well for the fair fame of Samuel that this story is obviously untrue. It is really difficult to see what Saul's offence was supposed to be. At any rate we try in vain to discover anything that he had done to deserve so heavy a punishment. We must remember that the writer does not blame Saul for exercising the functions of a priest, and offering a sacrifice, for this was not considered unlawful in his days, but merely for not waiting long enough for Samuel. He seems to intend us to understand that the seventh day was not quite gone when Saul's patience was exhausted; but he does not exactly say that it was so. In fact he says distinctly, "He waited seven days, until the time that Samuel had appointed." He makes the difficulty in which Saul found himself appear so great that one would think it was his express purpose to throw blame upon Samuel's conduct. But this cannot really have been his intention. He doubtless wished to teach his readers that a prophet of Yahweh had a claim to absolute obedience, and that no excuses, however good they might appear, were to be accepted for transgressing any command, however hard or extraordinary. But this cannot have been the real course of events. It is impossible to believe that such a man as Samuel would have wished to make Saul an absolute slave, or would have overthrown the kingdom he had just helped to establish, for such a trivial cause as this. To do so would be to play fast and loose with Israel's independence, in a manner utterly unworthy of a patriot. But this is not the only reason for refusing to accept the narrative as true. Would Saul desert his strong position opposite the Philistines, and go and waste

his time at Gilgal, just at the very moment when he dreaded an attack? If so, the Israelites had good reason for distrusting such a clumsy and reckless leader. The Philistines, too, appear to have quietly waited until the Israelites returned and reoccupied the mountain pass they had deserted. Again, we are left entirely without information as to the moment at which these seven days of Saul's stay at Gilgal were supposed to begin. Lastly, Saul's zeal and courage do not appear from the narrative to have been damped in the least degree by Samuel's announcement that Yahweh had rejected him, and this is contrary to all that we know of his disposition. We shall therefore put this account of the meeting between Saul and Samuel entirely on one side for the present.

When this addition is struck out, the narrative itself throws some light upon several subjects that we have discussed already, and in its turn receives some light from them.

In the first place, it illustrates the remark we have already made,[1] that in ancient times the Israelites considered that a man's guilt was not in any way affected by the intention with which he had done anything. They simply asked whether the deed was in itself a trespass. If one man had killed another he must be put to death, whether he had done it by accident or on purpose; and in the same way Jonathan was condemned to death because he had tasted food after his father had pronounced a curse upon any one who should do so. It is true that the command was very ill-advised, as the writer himself does his best to show us; true that Jonathan merely transgressed the letter and not the spirit, for he only tasted the honey as he passed without pausing a moment in the pursuit; it is even true that he had not so much as heard of his father's prohibition: but for all that he was guilty, and it was therefore he that had drawn down Yahweh's wrath upon the people. Such was Saul's belief, the people did not dispute it for a moment, and the writer himself obviously holds the same view. The Israelites were better than their belief, but their belief was that it was Jonathan's act that had made Yahweh wroth. It was for this reason that Jonathan had to be redeemed or bought off, for the people could never have been satisfied until their angry god had been appeased.

In the next place this narrative shows that we did not exaggerate the ferocity that was characteristic of Samuel's activity as a judge;[2] for this action of Saul is quite in the

[1] See pp. 81, 82. [2] See pp. 452, 453.

spirit of Samuel — the spirit of zeal for the service of Yahweh, in accordance with the character ascribed to that god in the eleventh century before Christ. In this scene Saul appears before us as the true type of the faithful and zealous worshipper of the fearful god. Yahweh's demands are terrible, but for his true servant nothing is too hard. Saul casts lots between himself and Jonathan. He is willing to lay down his own life, should it appear by the answer of the god that he has unwittingly sinned against him; and when Jonathan turns out to be the guilty man, Saul smothers even his affection for his son, and is ready to offer him as a sacrifice. This is a sample of the kind of honor paid at this time to Yahweh, Israel's god, by the most zealous of his worshippers.

After studying this narrative we shall find nothing to surprise us in the later deeds of Saul, to which we have referred already in describing Samuel's activity,[1] — his persecution of the ventriloquists and the magicians, for instance, or his attempt to root out the Gibeonites. These were but fresh manifestations of the spirit he displayed in his treatment of his eldest son when he had transgressed. Saul was fanatical in his zeal for Yahweh. The struggle for Israel's freedom and power, to which he summoned the tribes, was to him a religious war. It was faith in the mighty Yahweh's help that enabled the Israelites under Saul's guidance to perform such heroic deeds, and that finally delivered the people from their foes. As in the times of Deborah and Jephthah, so now too it was in Yahweh's name that the enemy was routed. But in one important respect this period differed from those that had preceded it; for when Saul had gained his first victory he kept the reins of government in his hands, and, instead of disbanding his army, took up an offensive attitude towards his neighbors. He found pretexts for engaging in war first with one and then with another of the surrounding peoples, and under his rule therefore Israel was for the first time recognized as a united and formidable nation.

Saul's numerous victories, and the prosperity and glory which they brought to Israel, appear not only from the short account that closes the narrative we have just examined, but also from the dirge composed by David after the death of Saul and his sons. It is as follows[2]: —

> O Israel! thy glory lies slain on thy hills!
> How are the heroes fallen!
> Tell it not in Gath,
> Publish it not in the streets of Askelon;

[1] See pp. 449 ff. [2] 2 Samuel i. 19–27.

Lest the Philistine girls rejoice,
And the daughters of the uncircumcised dance for joy.
O mountains of Gilboa, let no dew or rain fall on you,
Ye fields and hills of death![1]
For there was the hero's shield cast away,
The shield of Saul, bespattered, all unanointed with oil.[1]
Without the blood of the slaughtered, without the fat of heroes
The bow of Jonathan turned not back;
The sword of Saul returned not empty.
Saul and Jonathan, the beloved and beauteous,
Were never parted in life or death;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
Ye daughters of Israel! weep for Saul,
Who clothed you in purple and splendor,
And threw jewels of gold round your necks.
How are the heroes fallen in battle,
And Jonathan slain on the heights!
I am grieved by thy loss, my brother Jonathan!
Thou wast very dear to me;
More precious to me was thy love than the love of women.
Alas! the heroes are fallen,
And their weapons of war have perished!

That Saul was no ordinary man, and well knew how to gain the love of his subjects is also shown by the sequel of the history, for the greater part of the Israelite nation clung to his house with a deep affection which long survived the accession of David to the throne.

We have no means of knowing how long Saul's reign lasted. At the beginning of this narrative, the period of his reign is given as two years. But this cannot be correct. Much more than this is required to allow time for everything that happened in his reign. For instance, while he was king, David rose to fame, was persecuted and compelled to pass sixteen months among the Philistines. We have no trustworthy information as to the length of Saul's reign elsewhere. We are told in the book of Acts [2] that he reigned forty years, and Josephus assigns him either forty or twenty years, it is not quite clear which. But the statements of these writers are of no value, for they had no sources of information except the old Scriptures. It has been conjectured that the two years of which the book of Samuel speaks cover the period of the king's friendship with Samuel, and that he was then declared to be deposed, though as a matter of fact he reigned for five years more. We shall touch upon the arguments in favor of this supposition presently; but even a period of seven years is hardly long enough for all that took place in this reign.

Saul had done great things for Israel. He had proved

[1] After an amended version. [2] Acts xiii. 21.

decisively that the Israelites were capable of being formed into a single nation; and had richly earned the title of Israel's deliverer. And yet his family fell with him. How it was that so brilliant a constellation set so soon we shall consider in the following chapter.

Chapter XXVI.

SAUL REJECTED BY YAHWEH.

1 Samuel XV.

THE following story is intended to explain why Saul's dynasty never took root in Israel: —

One day Samuel said to Saul: "It was I whom Yahweh sent to anoint you king over his people Israel. Listen therefore to the commands which he sends you by my mouth. Thus speaks Yahweh of Armies: 'I remember the evil that the Amalekites did to the Israelites as they came up out of Egypt; and now they must be chastised for it. Rise up, therefore, and lay the Amalekites under the ban. Spare them not; but put men and women, nay, the very children and the sucking babes to death; and slaughter the cattle and the sheep, the camels and the asses.'" In obedience to Yahweh's command Saul summoned the men of military age to Gilgal,[1] and soon found himself in command of two hundred thousand Israelites, and ten thousand Judæans.

With this formidable army he advanced against the Amalekites; but first, he warned the Kenites not to make common cause with them, for the Kenites had always been friendly to Israel, and Saul was anxious not to injure them. He now routed his enemies so utterly, that all their territory came into his power; and Agag himself, the king of the Amalekites, fell into his hands alive. Then Samuel's injunctions were carried into effect, Amalek was destroyed by fire and sword. Agag himself however was not slain, but was carried off as a prisoner, and Saul allowed some of the choicest cattle to be kept alive and driven off as booty.

He had to pay dearly for this act of folly. Yahweh was not to be mocked. Saul returned in triumph; raising a

[1] After an amended version.

triumphal column at Carmel, in the desert of Judah. But as he was on his way to Gilgal, Yahweh revealed himself to Samuel. "I repent," said he in wrath, "that I ever made Saul king; for he is disobedient, and now he shall be rejected!" Full of grief and terror, Samuel cried all night to his god, beseeching him to mitigate the sentence. But it was all in vain. He must himself bear Yahweh's message to the king.

Samuel went to meet Saul at Gilgal and found the victorious prince in the very act of offering a sacrifice to Yahweh from the first fruits of the booty.[1] He advanced to meet the prophet, and joyfully exclaimed, "May Yahweh bless thee! I have fulfilled his command!" But Samuel answered severely, "Then what is this sound I hear? What means this lowing of cattle and bleating of sheep?" Saul answered in some confusion, but still quite unconscious of having committed any serious fault, "These are some of the best of the Amalekites' cattle. The people spared them for a sacrifice to Yahweh, your god. But all the rest I have laid under the ban." Supposing that he had now completely justified himself, Saul tried to lead Samuel to the altar, but the prophet resisted his attempt and exclaimed, "Stay! I must deliver the message which Yahweh uttered to me in the night." "Speak on!" said Saul, auguring little good from Samuel's voice and manner. Then the prophet strove to make him feel his shameful disobedience. "Were you not little in your own sight when Yahweh anointed you king of Israel? How dared you then to rebel? And when he commanded you utterly to destroy the miserable Amalekites how dared you to neglect his word, to keep the spoil, and so to do evil in his sight?" Then Saul, perceiving that the prophet was in terrible earnest, endeavored to excuse himself: "I yielded to the people's wish,"[1] he said. "But I did obey the commandment of Yahweh, and though I have kept Agag alive yet I have rooted out the Amalekites. Only the people chose the best of the cattle and the other spoil to bring here to Gilgal, to sacrifice to Yahweh, your god." As if the sparing of Agag were a mere trifle! As if king Saul — taken in the very act of offering the sacrifice with his own hands — did not share in his people's guilt! Samuel passed over these excuses, as though Saul himself must know them to be idle, and merely answered the single plea that the cattle had been kept for a sacrifice. "Think you," he demanded

[1] After an amended version.

sternly, "that Yahweh delights in any sacrifice as much as in the obedience of his worshippers? Of a truth, obedience is better than any sacrifice;[1] to give ear to his words is better than the fat of rams; for disobedience is as great a sin as witchcraft, and obstinacy is as bad as the worship of *teraphim*.[1] Since you have despised the commands of Yahweh, he has deemed you unworthy to be king of Israel."

Humbled by these threatening words, Saul confessed his guilt in yielding to the wishes of his people, and implored forgiveness, at the same time begging Samuel to join with him in worshipping Yahweh. But Samuel had uttered no idle threat. Saul could not wash out his guilt by confessing it. He was once for all rejected of Yahweh. It was not till Samuel answered, "I will not go with you; for since you have transgressed Yahweh's commandment, he has rejected you utterly!" that Saul understood the full extent of his punishment. Upon this Samuel turned away to go; but Saul strove to detain him, and, in his despair, seized him by his mantle so violently as to tear off the flap. But Samuel only took occasion to repeat in another form the sentence of his god: "So Yahweh tears the kingdom of Israel from your hand this day, and gives it to another who is better than you. He who gives Israel victory lies not and changes not his thoughts; for he never repents, like a man, of what he has determined to do." Perceiving, at last, that the sentence was irrevocable, Saul exclaimed: "I have sinned. But yet support my authority before the nobles and all the people. Follow me and take part in the sacrifices and prayers in honor of Yahweh, your god." To this request Samuel assented.

When Saul began the sacrifice, and the sacred trumpets sounded, and the air rang with shouts of victory in honor of Yahweh, Samuel cried, "Bring forth Agag, king of the Amalekites!" The captive knew what he had to expect. He drew near the place of slaughter trembling, and cried aloud, "Oh! how bitter it is to die!"[1] But Samuel was not touched by his misery. His eye flashed with the fire of fanatical reverence for Yahweh and hatred of his people's enemies. Turning to the captive, he exclaimed passionately, "As your sword has made many women childless, so shall your mother be bereft of her son!" Upon this he swung the sacrificial axe on high and hewed Agag in pieces to the glory of Yahweh.

[1] After an amended version.

When the feast held in honor of the victory was over, Samuel went to his dwelling-place at Ramah, and Saul returned to Gibeah. From that day forward they never met again.

This story reminds us at once of the account of Saul's impatience at Gilgal, and the sentence which it drew upon his head.[1] The two stories have much in common. In both of them Saul's offence is disobedience to Samuel's command: in both his punishment is the fall of his dynasty, and both imply that Yahweh had already chosen his successor. The two cannot be reconciled, for the first does not speak of a provisional sentence, the execution of which might be averted by strict obedience. It speaks just as clearly as the second of an irrevocable decree of Yahweh. And in the second there is not the smallest reference to any previous announcement of Yahweh's displeasure.

The story we are now considering is no nearer the truth than the other. It was written centuries after the time of Saul, as we may see from the very fact of its putting into the mouth of Samuel such lofty thoughts as to the worship acceptable to Yahweh; for these ideas were first conceived and expressed by the great prophets of the eighth century before Christ, by such men, for instance, as Michah or Isaiah. The unhistorical character of the story is further evident from the impossible pretext given for the declaration of war against Amalek, from the exaggeration of the number of the warriors Saul is said to have had under his banner, and from the statement that Amalek was utterly destroyed, whereas we know that so soon as in David's time this people was again in a position to threaten Israel's safety.[2] But, apart from these details, the main idea of the story is untrue. For, like the other account, this also makes a single definite trespass — and a very trivial one — cause the ruin of Saul. It is impossible to believe that it was so really. To begin with, of course, we could not speak of Saul's being rejected by *God* upon such grounds; for Samuel's order to lay all Amalek under the ban is so repugnant to our feelings as Christians, that we should certainly never dream of ascribing it to God. But even if we overlook the fact that the writer believes Saul to have been rejected by Yahweh, and take the narrative simply to mean that he was rejected by Samuel, it is still incredible. Surely Samuel cannot have required such absolute submission on the part of the king that he declared himself against him, and took

[1] See p. 482. [2] 1 Samuel xxvii. 8; 2 Samuel viii. 12.

steps to dethrone him on the strength of one trifling act of disobedience. At any rate, if it were so, it would be a specimen of the most unscrupulous ambition and the most culpable levity in all that concerned the interests of the people.

We cannot regard this story as anything but an attempt to answer a question that suggested itself to the thoughtful Israelites of a later age. It was this: "How was it that Saul's family did not remain upon the throne of Israel, but that David succeeded to it?" A faithful worshipper of Yahweh would never think of looking for natural causes, such as the recent establishment of the monarchy, the character of Saul, his Benjamite extraction, Samuel's personal qualities, the defeat and death of Saul, or the incapacity of his surviving son. All this was nothing. The only answer that could satisfy him was that Yahweh had rejected Saul, whence it followed that Saul had committed some sin. This idea was worked out by the writers of both the legends of the rejection of Saul. Their purpose probably was to exhort their contemporaries to stricter obedience. It would be good for them, they thought, to be told that Saul's sin consisted in disobeying the commands of the prophets.

But in all probability there lies a certain truth at the bottom of both these stories: the truth that Saul quarrelled with Samuel, and that the opposition of the prophets contributed in no small degree to the fall of his house. It is easy to see in what particulars Saul would find himself unable permanently to act with Samuel, and in this respect our story has preserved a very correct impression of the real state of things. Let us try to recall the circumstances under which Saul became king, and the policy he first adopted.

The tribes of Israel were divided amongst themselves and were oppressed by hosts of enemies when a great religious revival, partly stimulated by Samuel, took place among the worshippers of Yahweh. The prophets formed societies; the Nazarites constantly increased in numbers, and many a heart was fired by the thought that the people of Yahweh must never mingle their blood with that of the Canaanites, and that the sons of Israel must regard everything heathenish as impure. But the ferment caused by these zealots, with Samuel at their head, would have resulted in Israel's downfall; for now that the injured Canaanites made common cause with the foreign foe, Israel would have been too weak to resist. It was, therefore, a great gain for the Israelites to find a man like Saul, who would watch over their general interests, lead them to

battle, retain a number of their fighting men under arms and enforce general obedience. Saul's skill and courage saved Israel from destruction.

But he too availed himself of the religious enthusiasm of the people, and, supported by the prophets, he summoned the tribes to battle in Yahweh's name. It was but natural, then, that in all respects he should adopt the principles of the zealots; for he was a thorough-going supporter of Samuel's policy, which, of course, he now put into action. The first legend of his rejection by Samuel is quite wrong in making him quarrel with the seer at the beginning of his reign; for he ruled entirely in his spirit for some time. He raised altars to Yahweh, and when he had made an oath to him he enforced it with such terrible severity as not to shrink from sacrificing his own life or that of his son to maintain its sanctity. He persecuted the ventriloquists and wizards to the very death. He would have no treaty of peace with the Canaanites; and in Gibeon and the neighborhood, as well as elsewhere, numbers of them fell beneath his hand, in honor of Yahweh.

But this could not last. In the first flush of excitement caused by the election of a king, while the impression made by his successful campaigns was still fresh, such a policy might be carried out. But Saul soon perceived that the path he was treading must inevitably lead the people to destruction in the end. He could not go through with these measures. The Israelites were too weak and his own throne was too insecure for this to be possible; and doubtless many of his subjects murmured against a policy which they had such good reason to regard as hazardous.

When the first excitement was over and the most pressing dangers averted, Saul, no longer surrounded by the incessant whirl and din of battle, began to consider his line of action more calmly, and to act with greater moderation. We may suppose that his heart, too, protested against the wholesale bloodshed involved in the strict maintenance of Yahweh's command to root out all heathens and sinners with fire and sword. A hint to this effect is still preserved in the story of his war with Amalek and his neglecting fully to enforce all the horrors of the ban.

But by this milder policy he came into collision with the zealots; for they knew no pity. They are fitly represented by the fierce, inexorable Samuel, who would not have the sucking child of an Amalekite spared, and hewed Agag into pieces with his own hand, at Yahweh's altar. These zealots

began to oppose the king from the very moment that his policy became milder, for they thought that he was kindling the wrath of Yahweh by his weakness, and so bringing ruin upon Israel. Away with him then!

But the great mass of the people by no means shared the views of the zealots and remained faithful to Saul. Nevertheless these circumstances were a source of strength to his enemies, and his own rashness gave them only too many opportunities of turning their advantages to account. But we shall return to this subject presently.

This story of Saul's rejection by Yahweh, then, has little value as history; at the most it does but indicate the line we must follow in order to gain a true idea of what occurred. But there are certain great religious truths expressed in it which make the whole scene rich and beautiful in many ways. It urges us to fulfil the commandments of God to the very uttermost, making no reservations. It teaches us that nothing can make up for disobedience to the will of God.

God does not command us to commit horrors in his name, to shed human blood, or to show our zeal for the truth by deeds of violence; but he commands us to be loving, helpful, strict in the performance of our duties, just, diligent, and self-denying. Though it is often man that makes these duties clear to us, yet we know by the echo which they wake in our hearts that they are the commands of God, and that, as such, they demand our unconditional obedience.

Alas! how often we find ourselves, like Saul, but half fulfilling the command, and then deceiving ourselves and others by saying, "I have done as the Lord commanded me!" Such words could only be true on the lips of one who had fallen short in no respect of fulfilling God's commands. Jesus gives striking utterance to the same truth in his parable of the "unprofitable servant,"[1] in which he teaches us that the man who has done everything that he ought to do has after all only done just enough. Every instance of neglect of perfect obedience makes us guilty before God.

And these deficiencies cannot be made good by burnt offerings or by any other means. In all ages men have imagined that they could, and have tried to make up for their neglected duties by presents to the deity, or some other outward sign of honor, such as prayers, fasts, alms, going to church, sound doctrine, correct forms of worship, or a will in which some

[1] Luke xvii. 7–10.

small part of their ill-earned wealth is bestowed upon charitable objects. It is all in vain. "Obedience is better than any sacrifice." This is the most precious truth preached to us by the mouth of Samuel. Let us strive never to forget it!

Chapter XXVII.

YAHWEH'S CHOSEN ONE AT THE COURT OF SAUL.

1 Samuel XVI., XVIII. 5–13.

"SAMUEL never saw Saul again all his life; but he grieved for him deeply. Whereas Yahweh repented that he had made Saul king over Israel." Such are the final words of the prophetic narrative we have last considered. That which follows is closely connected with it, and breathes the same spirit. Some time after the events at Gilgal, Yahweh said to Samuel, "How long will you go on mourning over Saul, whom I have deemed unworthy to rule over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, for I will send you to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, one of whose sons I have chosen to be king." But the prophet hesitated to obey the command, and exclaimed, "How can I go to Bethlehem for such a purpose? If Saul should hear of it he would take my life." But Yahweh answered, "Take a young ox with you, and tell them at Bethlehem that you have come to make a sacrifice to me. Ask Jesse to the feast, and I will tell you what next to do. You have only to anoint as king him whom I show to you." Thus Samuel's objection was overruled, and he declared himself ready to obey.

When the news of his approach reached Bethlehem, consternation seized the inhabitants; for Samuel's visits seldom boded good. He was the stern instrument of Yahweh's judgments; and corpses hanging on the gibbet, or buried under great heaps of stones raised to perpetuate their shame, fields smitten by the ban and condemned to lie untilled, or dwellings cursed and levelled with the ground—such were, too often, the monuments that kept the memory of Samuel's visits fresh. Had any one at Bethlehem been guilty of a crime or folly that called for fire and sword to expiate it? Who could tell? Samuel was so stern in judgment! The elders of the city went trembling to meet him,

but what a weight was lifted from their hearts when, in answer to the question, "O seer, comest thou in peace?" Samuel replied, "I come in peace; to offer a sacrifice to Yahweh. Consecrate yourselves, and celebrate with me a feast of joy."[1]

Samuel took up his abode with Jesse, whom he invited, together with all his sons, to the sacrifice, promising at the same time personally to superintend the consecrations and purifications that they must perform ere they could appear before Yahweh's face. While still in the house, he requested Jesse to present all his sons to him, one by one, and when Eliab, the eldest, entered, he thought, "Surely, this is the anointed one whom Yahweh has chosen!" But his god said to him, "Think not so much of his appearance and the height of his stature, for I have rejected him. I judge not as a man judges; for man is astonished by the outward show, but Yahweh thinks only of the disposition of the heart." Then Jesse let Abinadab follow; but neither did he appear to be the chosen one of Yahweh. The same lot fell to Shammah and all the seven sons of Jesse. Then Samuel asked, "Have you no other sons?" "Yes," was the reply, "there is one more, the youngest, whom you have not seen; but he is not here, for he is pasturing the flocks." "Send for him, then," said the seer, "for we will not march round the altar[2] till he is here."[3] Then Jesse sent for his youngest son, David, and when he entered, with his fair complexion, his beautiful eyes, and his noble presence, Yahweh said to Samuel, "Stand up and anoint him, for this is he!" So the man of God took his oil-horn, and anointed David king in the midst of his brothers; and straightway the spirit of Yahweh came upon him, and remained with him from that day forward. As soon as he had superintended the sacrificial feast, Samuel returned to Ramah.

Saul had soon cause to know that he was rejected, and that Yahweh deemed another the true king of Israel; for the spirit of Yahweh, which had so often, hitherto, kindled a holy zeal within him and led him on to victory, now departed from him. But Yahweh sent instead an evil spirit, that made him fearful, despondent, and passionate. His attendants soon noticed his fits of partial madness, and rightly guessed their cause. "It is an evil spirit of God," they said to their prince, "that troubles you. Let us seek out a skilful player on the harp,

[1] After an amended version. [2] Compare Psalm xxvi. 6.
[3] After an amended version.

that his music may put the demon to flight, and that you may be at peace." Saul accepted their advice, and before long one of his servants told him of David, who united in himself all possible attractions. He played skilfully on the harp, was courageous in battle, a warrior from top to toe, eloquent in speech, beautiful in person, and evidently beloved of Yahweh. The king longed to see this wonderful young Bethlehemite at his court, and sent to ask Jesse to let his son come to him. The father could hardly refuse the request; so he sent David to Saul with a present of a kid, a skin of wine, and as much bread as could be made from a *gomer* (about five and a half bushels) of corn. Thus David came to Saul, who soon became much attached to him, made him his armor-bearer, and begged Jesse to allow him to stay with him for good. His skill in playing the harp was a great blessing to his master, for when the evil spirit came upon Saul, David would touch his harp, and at once the king would be relieved, and the demon would depart from him. But David distinguished himself in other ways, and it soon became evident that his courage and skill in handling his weapons had not been exaggerated. In fact, whatever Saul gave him to do, he accomplished with such brilliant success that he was soon set over the royal life-guards, and stood high in the favor both of the people and of Saul's courtiers. But this very success was near costing him his life; for once, as he was returning in triumph, laden with booty, from a raid upon the Philistines, Saul joined him and accompanied him, at the head of the forces, to Gibeah, where a troop of girls and women from all the cities of Israel had assembled to greet the king with music and song. But no sooner had one chorus cried, "Saul has struck his thousands down," than the other responded in triumph, "and David his ten thousands!" If the people had done it on purpose, they could not have found a surer means of bringing their favorite to disgrace; for these words roused the king's jealousy against his too successful servant. "They have given me thousands only," he was heard to mutter, "but they talk of David's ten thousands! What does he lack except the crown?" From this moment Saul laid snares for David's life. The very next day his hatred broke out with the utmost violence. One of his fits had hurled him raving to the ground in his own house, and David attempted, as usual, to drive away the evil spirit by playing on the harp. But the madman seized his lance, and cried, "I will pin David to the wall." His intended victim darted from his presence, but soon

returned once more to try the strength of his music against the demon that tormented his lord. No sooner had he returned than the spear quivered in the hand of Saul, and fire flashed from his eyes. David's music had lost its power, for the prince had conceived a dread of an attendant so evidently protected by Yahweh, while he himself was deserted. Saul, therefore, removed David from the court, and gave him command of a troop stationed elsewhere. But, of course, this change did not prevent the people from keeping their eyes fixed upon David, and duly observing all his exploits.

The account of Samuel's anointing David king is obviously legendary. Such conversations between Yahweh and Samuel, as are here recorded, could not really take place. Is it possible to believe that Samuel was informed by a direct communication from Yahweh that David, a man utterly unknown to him, was to be Saul's successor? It is in vain to answer, "Why! does not God foresee everything?" for, in the first place, God never unveils the details of the future in this way to any man; and, in the second place, what right have we to identify the Yahweh here spoken of with God whom we adore and love? Remember that this Yahweh instructs Samuel to invent a false pretext for going to Bethlehem, in order to make it safe to do so. Is this dishonesty worthy of God? We have had so many proofs already[1] of the want of any fine perception in such matters on the part of the Israelite historians, that this trait does not at all surprise us; but we must not translate "Yahweh" by "God," and then appeal to *God's* knowledge of the future in support of the story that Samuel foretold David's future lot. A still further proof of the unhistorical nature of the whole narrative may be found in the circumstance that, though Samuel is in great terror of incurring the wrath of Saul before he sets out for Bethlehem, he nevertheless anoints David "in the midst of his brethren." Did he imagine that a secret known to so many could still be kept? But, after all, the strongest objection to the truth of the story is derived from the subsequent conduct of David. Unless we regard him as a thorough-going scoundrel, we cannot believe that he could have acted as he did if he had really been anointed king by Samuel at the beginning of his career. We shall touch upon this point once more in another connection.

As to the way in which David first gained access to the court of Saul the traditions vary. One of them, to be given

[1] See pp. 189 ff.; pp. 260, 353.

in the following chapter, makes him owe his introduction to Saul to a great feat of arms — his victory over Goliath — and represents him as being quite unknown both to Saul and to all his courtiers before this exploit. This account cannot be reconciled with the one we have just considered. It is true that the writer who wove the two together tells us that David went home again[1] before the fight with the Philistine giant from which his fame as a warrior sprang. But even this does not remove the contradiction; for it is impossible that Saul could have so completely forgotten the man who had for a time rescued him by his music from the demon that tormented him, whom he had made his shield-bearer, and whom, as we are expressly told, he had learned to love. Besides, the first story tells us distinctly that David stayed at court, and did not go home. It is of small consequence, however, whether David first distinguished himself at court as a musician or as a warrior. A bard who could wake a rousing or voluptuous strain as he sang of war or love, and could sound the praises of departed or still living heroes, was sure to be a welcome guest; while a bold warrior who could point to a heap of Philistine heads as witnesses to his strong arm, his steady hand, and his quick eye, would be greeted with yet louder acclaim. All the traditions speak of David especially as a valiant warrior; but there appears also to be some truth in the story of his skill upon the harp, and the influence it exercised over Saul.

The whole story we are now considering naturally falls into three sections, which tell us respectively: (1) How David was anointed; (2) how he came to the court; and (3) how his life was threatened by Saul. But the three sections are united into a well-proportioned whole, in which a single leading thought is consistently worked out. It is by no means accidental that the account of Samuel's anointing David is immediately followed by the words, "Then the spirit of Yahweh departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him." From the writer's point of view, these two events are closely connected with each other. The spirit of Yahweh passed over from Saul to David. Thus, although Saul continued to reign as a matter of fact, yet in Yahweh's eye he was already succeeded by David, who therefore enjoyed the blessing and protection of his God. The writer wishes to impress us with the fact that Yahweh had no sooner rejected Saul than he selected another king. David's ascent of the throne, there-

[1] 1 Samuel xvii. 15.

fore, is not to be attributed to the natural course of events, to the many circumstances which heightened the natural effect produced by his character and achievements, but simply to the supreme will and pleasure of Yahweh, who "slays and makes alive, bruises and heals, from whose hand there is no deliverance,"[1] who raises up kings and deposes them after his own good pleasure.

There is certainly a kind of sublimity in this conception. It converts history from a mass of disconnected facts, a mere succession of accidents, into a single whole, a chain every link of which is essential. And if we think of Him whose supreme will reveals itself in the fall of this and the exaltation of that monarch, as wisdom, holiness, and love, there is deep comfort in the thought that He rules all things. But on the other hand, if, instead of confining ourselves to generalities, we take up some special portion of the history of mankind, and call some single fact, taken by itself, a revelation of the will of God, there is great danger of our blunting our moral perceptions. Take this very instance: Saul's dynasty fell. This was the natural consequence of a hundred different circumstances. Are we then, without any qualification or reserve, to say that it was the expression of God's will? Suppose it should appear that David supplanted Saul by underhand devices and illicit practices, and, further, that his throne stood firmer than Saul's had done, not because it was founded on a better right, but because it was occupied by a man who knew better than his predecessor how to accommodate himself to circumstances; suppose for a moment that all this were to appear, should we be justified in saying that God gives his sanction to such deeds? Surely not.

The Israelite writer, as a friend of David's dynasty, and as a prophet who believed that Yahweh had created good and evil alike, had no hesitation in ascribing the rise of his hero's house to the over-ruling power of his god; and he required no further explanation. But if we follow him in this, we incur two dangers. In the first place we lose all inclination to examine the various circumstances which led to David's becoming king and superseding the family of Saul. We simply say "the Lord ordained it," and look no further. But the second and by far the greater danger is that of becoming blind to Saul's virtues and to David's faults. This danger was partially realized in the case of this Israelitish writer, for

[1] Deuteronomy xxxii. 39.

he darkens the character of Saul, and loads David with praises. But we are in danger of carrying it yet further, for we think of God as a far purer being than this Israelite's Yahweh was to him. If we say that *God* willed that David should succeed Saul, because he was a prince more nearly after His heart, we cannot help thinking of David as nobler than Saul; whereas the writer of this story half-unconsciously started from the belief that whichever turned out to be the stronger must be the one whom Yahweh had chosen. Let us ever be on our guard against this idea. In this world the crown of victory is often worn by sin, and the side that is worsted for the time is often the side of God.

In this story, as well as in that of the rejection of Saul, some fine thoughts are well expressed. We are struck by the words, "Man judges by the outward show, but Yahweh looks within;" that is to say, "The world, as a rule, values a rich, handsome, powerful man above a poor, deformed, and weak one; but Yahweh judges a man by his heart, by the measure of his righteousness." This is nobly said: but it is curious to notice how, when Saul is chosen king, our attention is fixed upon his physical superiority. Samuel points out his great stature, and says to the people, "See what a king Yahweh has chosen; for there is not his like among all the people."[1] Even our writer himself, though he has just declared that Yahweh thinks only of that which is within, cannot help telling us with delight of David's fair complexion, beautiful eyes, and noble appearance, when first he brings him upon the stage. His instincts were too strong for his convictions!

Our story tells us that the spirit of Yahweh left Saul, and that an evil spirit sent by Yahweh troubled him. This points to a change for the worse in Saul's character; and it is a fact that his life is divided into two periods, in the latter of which he appears in a much less favorable light than in the former. The change did not take place suddenly, nor was it the result of Samuel's journey to Bethlehem; but it came about gradually, and can be explained without much difficulty from the special circumstances of the case. We have already seen[2] that Saul was at first a zealous partisan of Samuel's school, but that he afterwards changed his policy. He saw that if he continued his jealous defence of Yahweh's glory in the mode encouraged by the fanaticism of the prophets he would soon bring Israel to destruction, and

[1] 1 Samuel x. 23, 24. [2] See p. 492.

he was therefore compelled gradually to change his tactics, to live at peace with the Canaanites, to tolerate heathen practices, and to relax to some extent his strenuous efforts to enforce the full demands of Yahweh in all their rigor. His character suffered greatly by this change; not so much because he incurred the displeasure of the prophets as because he was acting more or less against the conviction of his own conscience. If the prophetic rapture had been altogether outside his own experience, if he had been of a naturally cool and calculating disposition, he would have been able to bear the fanatical opposition of his old allies far better. But Saul was of a highly-wrought and passionate temperament. Hitherto the stormy violence of his nature had expressed itself in zeal for Yahweh's glory, but now this vent was closed against it by the dictates of prudence. The fire, thus confined, could not but break through in some other direction, and reveal itself in bursts of frenzy. And, again, what is harder to bear than the opposition of former friends, especially when their opinions still find an echo in our hearts in spite of ourselves?

Neither music nor anything else could avail in the long run to divert these bursts of madness. The evil was too deep-rooted. If Saul could be at peace once more with himself and with the policy he found himself pursuing, if his bloodthirsty zeal for Yahweh could be transformed into a holy zeal for God, then, but then only, would the demon depart from him. As it was, his moral nature could not bear the strain of these two hostile forces tearing him two ways — his fanatical zeal for Yahweh, and his rational love of his people.

Chapter XXVIII.

JONATHAN AND DAVID.

1 Samuel XVII. 1–XVIII. 4, XVIII. 17–XX.

"ALL the time that Saul was king the war between the Israelites and the Philistines was raging fiercely; and Saul endeavored, as far as he could, to collect all the heroes round his person." These are the concluding words of the account of the first victory which Saul gained over

the Philistines through the valor of Jonathan,[1] and they serve to connect that story with the one that follows.

War had broken out again. The Philistines had led their troops into the field, and had penetrated to Shochoh, a city of Judah, where their progress had been stayed by the Israelite army. The two camps were separated only by a single valley. One army was encamped on each of the opposing slopes, but neither dared to quit its own position and endeavor to storm that of the enemy. After a time, however, a certain Goliath of Gath advanced as a champion from the Philistine ranks. He was a terrible opponent: six ells and a span (nearly ten feet) in height, his head cased in a brazen helmet, a scaled coat of mail, weighing five thousand shekels (about three quarters of a hundredweight), on his breast, his legs protected by brazen greaves, a war-mace of the same material hanging between his shoulders, the shaft of his spear like a weaver's beam, and its head weighing more than six hundred shekels. His armor-bearer carried a huge shield before him. Such was the dread champion who stepped from the ranks of the Philistines and scornfully cried to the Israelites, "Why draw yourselves up in battle array? Am not I a Philistine, and are not all you servants of Saul? Choose a champion, then, and let him come out and face me! If he can slay me, then we will submit to you; but if I prevail, you shall serve us." So cried the Philistine; and when he saw that none of the Israelites would venture on single combat with him, he broke into contemptuous taunts. "Dare you not? I defy the armies of Israel! Come, choose your man, for I am ready." But no one dared to accept his challenge. All the heroes that surrounded Saul felt their hearts sink within them when they looked upon the giant. Every day he came out again and uttered bitter taunts, "forty days" long.

Such was the state of things when a certain David arrived at the camp of Israel. He was the son of a Bethlehemite named Jesse, who was already far advanced in years. His three elder brothers, Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah, were serving in Saul's army; whereas he himself, being the youngest, had remained at home. In consequence of no one's accepting the challenge of Goliath, the campaign had been dragged out until Jesse was sure his sons would want more provisions, — for each soldier had to provide for himself. Accordingly he sent David with an ephah (about half

[1] 1 Samuel xiv. 52.

a bushel) of parched corn and ten loaves of bread for his brothers, besides ten pieces of cheese as a present for their captain. He was also to ask after their welfare, and see whether they were in want of anything.[1] It was morning when he reached the army of the Israelites, closely beset by the foe, and the soldiers were just being drawn out in battle array. David left the provisions in charge of the keepers of the baggage, went to the front, found his brothers, and asked after their welfare. As they were standing together talking, the giant advanced again and hurled his boastful defiance at the Israelites. Mortified, humiliated, and amazed, David inquired what all this meant, and was soon informed how scornfully the Philistine champion dared the Israelite army to battle, and what magnificent promises the king had made to any one who should succeed in slaying him; how he would load him with riches, give him his daughter to wife, and release his whole family from military duties. "What!" exclaimed David, "Is the man who slays this Philistine to receive so much? Is so great a reward to be given for so small a service? What is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the army of the living God?" On repeating his question again and again he always received the same answer, till at last his language attracted the attention of several of the Israelites, and amongst them of Eliab, his eldest brother. Eliab resented the contemptuous tone in which his young brother spoke, and said, "What have you come here for? To see the battle, I suppose! Why did you not stay to look after the sheep? I know you well. You are capable of any piece of madness." "Why, surely," answered David, "there is no harm in asking![1] You need not be so angry." Upon this he went to another part of the camp, saw the Philistine again, heard the horror-stricken soldiers speak about him, found himself less and less able to contain his indignation, and gave out more and more distinctly and decidedly that he at least had courage to accept the challenge. At length the news reached Saul that there was a young man in the camp who seemed inclined to undertake the combat, and accordingly David was led into the royal presence.

No sooner was he brought before Saul than he cried out, in a burst of warlike zeal, "Let not my liege's heart fail him because of this Philistine! I will go out and fight with him." But Saul hesitated to accept him as Israel's cham-

[1] After an amended version.

pion. "Do you know what you are doing?" he asked. "Surely you are no match for him! You are but a lad, and he has been trained to war from his youth." But David answered, "It is no mere folly in me to dare to do this thing; for once when I was pasturing my father's flocks, we were surprised by a lion, and he stole one of the sheep. So I gave him chase, and struck at him till he let go the sheep. Then he turned round upon me: but I seized him by the throat and throttled him. And another time I did the same to a bear. I have conquered a lion and a bear, and surely this Philistine is no stronger than they were! Why should not I go out and lay him low, and take away the shame of Israel? For who is this uncircumcised wretch, that he should dare to insult the army of the living God? Yahweh defended me against the lion and the bear, and he will bring me back as scathless from the battle with this Philistine." Saul's hesitation was now completely overcome. He saw that however young his champion might be, he was no mere reckless boy. With the words, "Go! and may Yahweh help you!" he accepted David's championship. In order to give the young hero every chance, Saul wished to equip him with his own armor and his own weapons. David allowed himself to be thus prepared for the battle, but when he had placed the helmet on his head and the armor on his limbs, and had girt the sword to his side, he found that these unaccustomed arms so encumbered his movements that, after a second trial,[1] he laid them aside. So he went to meet the Philistine in his own dress, in which he felt at ease, his shepherd's staff in his hand, five smooth stones in his wallet, and no weapon but his sling. A stream of curses poured from the savage lips of his opponent when he saw him approach. What! a fair-fleshed, blooming boy with nothing but a stick in his hand, to be matched with him, armed as he was from head to foot, and with his shield-bearer at his side! "Am I a dog?" he cried in fury. "Come near, and as sure as Dagon lives I will give your flesh to the wolves and vultures!" "Nay," answered David, "but that fate is yours and your countrymen's, for you have insulted the armies of Israel's God. You trust in sword and lance and shield, but I repose on Yahweh's might. This day shall it be seen that victory waits not on the strength of arms, but on Yahweh's will alone."

[1] After an amended version.

With these words the champions rushed upon each other; but the combat was soon decided, for before Goliath could so much as come near David, a stone from the shepherd's sling struck his forehead with such force that it sank into his head, and the giant fell to the earth. David sprang upon his foe, placed his foot upon his body, and, having no sword of his own, drew that of Goliath from its sheath and struck off his head with it. The Philistines instantly turned in hurried flight, while the Israelites pursued them to Gath, nay to the very gates of Ekron, and the whole way was strewn with corpses. Then they returned and plundered the deserted camp.

But we must go back to David. He brought the Philistine's head to Jerusalem, and afterwards hung up his armor in his own tent. But first, of course, he had an interview with Saul. He was quite unknown to the king. When first he went to meet the Philistines Saul said to his general, Abner, "Do you know who he is, Abner?" And Abner could only answer, "As sure as I live, I know not." Saul told him at once to make inquiries; but as David returned with Goliath's head in his hand Saul himself questioned him, and he replied, "I am David the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite." Well may the hearts of Saul and his followers have been filled at that moment with gratitude to the hero who had taken away the reproach of Israel, and delight in his youth and beauty, mingled with a tinge of jealousy at the thought that one so young should have put to shame so many veteran warriors! But there was one especially who felt drawn irresistibly to the victorious shepherd boy. It was Jonathan. And when Saul insisted that Goliath's conqueror should not return home but should remain with him, David soon learned to return Jonathan's friendship with all his heart. In soldier style they sealed the bond of friendship by exchanging their clothes and weapons, so that Jonathan gave David his mantle and coat of mail, together with his sword, his bow, and his girdle.

The story of this victory over Goliath cannot be accepted as a correct account of the way in which David and Saul became known to each other. We have seen already that it contradicts the story that precedes it, and a few small inaccuracies show that its author lived after the time of David. For instance, he says that Goliath's head was carried to Jerusalem,[1] whereas that city was still in the hands of the Can-

[1] 1 Samuel xvii. 54.

aanites at the time. Again, in the words that he puts into his hero's mouth, we recognize the religious conceptions of the prophets of a later age; for he makes David declare that his victory would prove that success depends upon Yahweh's will rather than upon strength of arms.[1] All this, however, would give us no right to deny the historical character of the main facts of the story, were it not for the circumstance that elsewhere in the book of Samuel[2] the honor of having slain Goliath is attributed to another man. The passage referred to runs:[3] "When there was war again with the Philistines, at Gezer, Elhanan, the son of Jair, the Bethlehemite, slew Goliath of Gath, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." There cannot be the smallest doubt that the Goliath mentioned here is the same as the Goliath of our story. Now he cannot have been slain both by David and by Elhanan; and since popular legends are always prone to heap upon a single favorite the achievements of a number of less celebrated heroes,[4] it is far more likely that the credit of Elhanan's exploit should have been given to David than that anything which David had really done should have been attributed to a warrior otherwise unknown. The writer of the book of Chronicles noticed the contradiction, and tried to remove it; for we can hardly suppose his version of the affair to be due to a mere slip of the pen. He says,[5] "And Elhanan, the son of Jair, slew Lachmi (N.B. 'Beth-hal*lachmi*" is the Hebrew for 'the Bethlehemite'), the brother of Goliath, the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam." This is an example of the way in which the Israelites of the third century before Christ were prepared to pervert a text rather than admit that two passages of the Holy Scripture contained contradictory accounts. Similar motives urged our own translators to imitate the Chronicler; and in the "Authorized Version" the passage in the book of Samuel itself is given thus:[6] "Elhanan, the son of Jaareoregim, a Bethlehemite, slew *the brother of* Goliath the Gittite," though the Hebrew says nothing of the kind. This is but a specimen of the dangers into which we are brought by the conviction that there *can* be no contradictions in the Bible. It is so apt to make our work dishonest.

But if David did not slay Goliath, he certainly gained great glory as a brave and skilful warrior, and soon earned a place

[1] Compare pp. 24, 25, 290, 291.
[2] 2 Samuel xxi. 19.
[3] After an amended version.
[4] See pp. 233, 254.
[5] 1 Chronicles xx. 5.
[6] 2 Samuel xxi. 19.

by the side of his friend Jonathan, who had been the first to venture upon attacking the Philistines. When Jonathan entered on his league of friendship with David, and exchanged arms with him, doubtless he, the prince, had a great deal the worst of the bargain; and this first passage strikingly foreshadows the whole history of their friendship. For though it was equally sincere on both sides, yet it so happened that Jonathan was involved in the greatest perplexities by his attachment to David, which proved, however, an unmixed advantage to his friend. All this will be abundantly illustrated as we go on with the history.

After Goliath's death there were chances enough for Saul's heroes to gain distinction in the war with the Philistines. David's fame soon towered above that of all his rivals, and he became the darling of his people. But for that very reason Saul began to regard him with growing distrust and even fear, till at last he wished to get rid of him. To accomplish this end he offered him his eldest daughter, Merab, to wife, on condition of his distinguishing himself still further in the "war of Yahweh" against the Philistines. He hoped that David's rashness might bring him to his death in this enterprise. But in this he was disappointed, and fearing that David would become too powerful if he married his eldest daughter, he broke his promise, and gave her to a certain Adriel of Meholah. But Saul's second daughter, Michal, had fallen in love with David, and her father made use of this attachment to set the same trap again. He told his courtiers to sound David on the subject, and when David repeated what he had said before, that he was too poor a man to dare to raise his eyes so high as to the daughter of the king, he was given to understand that Saul would require no other gift from him, as the price of the bride, than proof that he had slain two hundred Philistines. David soon accomplished this task, and Saul was obliged to give him Michal. She was deeply attached to her husband, and proved a faithful ally to him against the machinations of her father, whose hostility and desire to get rid of David only increased as time went on.

Once, when David had gained fresh laurels, Saul could conceal his suspicion and hatred no longer, and openly declared to Jonathan and his courtiers how gladly he would be freed from his prosperous son-in-law. The sincerity of Jonathan's friendship was now put to the test. He first warned

David of what was going on, and then, cautiously but straightforwardly, represented to his father how wrong he was to seek the life of this man, who had relieved him from such misery and conferred such blessings upon Israel by slaying the Philistine, and had never done him any wrong. Blessed are the peacemakers! Jonathan was successful, this time, in bringing his father to a better frame of mind, and David returned to court as before.

But when, some time afterwards, he had gained another victory over the Philistines, Saul, in a burst of frenzy, hurled a javelin at his head as he sat playing the harp before him. His intended victim darted aside and left him, but Saul sent a band of soldiers to surround the door of his house and slay him in the morning. And now Michal's affection stood David in good stead, for she warned him of his danger, and he let himself down from a window and escaped. Meanwhile Michal laid the *teraphim* in his bed, and when Saul's soldiers entered she pointed to it and said that her husband was ill. When the trick was discovered her father furiously demanded why she assisted his foes. She excused herself by saying that David had threatened her with death if she did not allow him to escape.

Meanwhile David fled to Samuel at Ramah and told him all that Saul had done. Then they went to the school of the prophets together.[1] But when Saul heard where the fugitive had gone his rage broke forth anew. David gone to Samuel! David in the midst of the prophets! It boded nothing but mischief, for who was now more bitterly hostile to the king than that very party of fanatics with whom he had formerly been at one? He sent a troop of soldiers in all haste to Ramah with orders to seize David; but they were doubtless unwilling, from the first, to carry out their instructions: they were filled with a sacred awe of the holy place, and hardly had they seen the band of prophets advancing with music and dance — Samuel at their head — hardly had they caught the sound of their inspired utterances and cries to Yahweh, when they themselves felt the infection of the religious excitement, and joined in prophesying. The experience of a second and third company of soldiers was the same. On hearing this Saul leaped up in frenzy, and, hardly knowing what he was about, set out himself for Ramah. At the great well, near the city, he was informed, in answer to his questions, that Samuel and David

[1] After an amended version.

were in the prophets' cloister. Thither he directed his steps; but reminiscences of a former time, reverence for the sacred person of Samuel, penitence for his past conduct, and dissatisfaction with his present purposes, waked a new spirit in him as he went. His anger changed to prophetic inspiration. He flung aside his outer garments, gave way to his enthusiasm, and in the midst of the prophets, whose amazement soon gave way to exultation, he burst into cries of glory to Yahweh and stood up and danced before Samuel. Then exhaustion came upon his overwrought system, and he lay on the ground, stripped of his outer garments, a whole day and night. Thus did Yahweh show his power over his adversary, and hence arose the proverb, "Is Saul, too, among the prophets?"

The account of David's stay at Ramah is immediately followed in the book of Samuel by the story of an act of friendship done to him by Jonathan. This story, however, is quite inconsistent with that of the reconciliation between Saul and David brought about by Jonathan. For in the former story Jonathan appears before Saul as his friend's champion, whereas in this he is still quite unconscious of any hostile intentions on the part of his father. The story runs as follows: —

When David left Ramah he sought an interview with Jonathan and said to him: "What have I done to your father that he should seek my life?" His friend answered in utter amazement, "He never dreamed of taking your life! My father does nothing without first consulting me; and surely he would never have kept anything of such importance as this a secret from me!" David swore a great oath that it was as he had said, and as for Jonathan's objection it was soon met. "Your father knows well enough," he said, "that I have found favor in your eyes. So he thinks to himself, 'Why should I tell Jonathan? It would only grieve him.' But as sure as Yahweh lives there is but a step between me and death." Dismayed by the words of his friend, and half convinced of their truth, Jonathan answered, "Then what would you have me do?" David suggested a means by which he might discover the king's real disposition towards him. The next day happened to be the feast of the new moon, and David determined to absent himself from his usual place at the king's table.[1] In explanation of his absence Jonathan was to say that he

[1] After an amended version.

had asked leave to go to celebrate a family festival at Bethlehem. If the king graciously accepted this excuse it would show that David had only fancied that he was out of favor. If, on the other hand, his suspicions were correct, Saul would be sure to give some indication of their truth. "And then," concluded David, "be merciful to me, for we have sworn by Yahweh to be true in our friendship. If I have done wrong then slay me yourself; but betray me not to your father." Jonathan promised faithfully to report how things stood. Then they went out into the fields together to arrange some signal by which Jonathan might tell David what to do, in case they could not have another interview. There they renewed their vows of friendship, and Jonathan even made David promise not to put him to death — or his posterity should he be dead himself already — when he became Saul's successor.

The day of the new moon broke. The sacrifice was offered, and the banquet was prepared. Saul took his usual place against the wall of his house. Next him, on one side, sat Abner, while David's empty seat stood by him on the other side. Jonathan, instead of sitting as usual at his father's side, took his seat opposite him, that he might be able to observe him more narrowly. The king said nothing about David's absence. No doubt he thought that some accident had made him unclean, and so prevented his being able to take part in a sacrificial meal. But when David's place was still empty on the following day, he said to Jonathan, "Why has not the son of Jesse been present at the banquet either yesterday or to-day?" Jonathan answered as had been agreed, "David entreated me to let him go to Bethlehem, for there was a family sacrifice there to which his brothers had invited him. He wanted to see his relatives again, and that is why he is not at the king's table." Upon this Saul's rage boiled over. "Child of a rebellious woman," he burst out, "did I not know that you had conspired with Jesse's son against me? You are bringing shame upon yourself and upon your mother. For know that as long as he is alive you will never rest securely on the throne. Come, then, bring him here to me, for he must be put to death!" But Jonathan answered boldly, "Why must he die? What has he done wrong?" When Saul was in a passion it was not safe to be near him. His hand was already laid on his javelin, and Jonathan retired hastily and remained apart. He saw but too clearly how things stood,

and in mingled indignation and sorrow he fasted all that day because his father was so unjust to David.

The next morning he went to the appointed place in the fields accompanied by a boy. He told his slave to go and collect the arrows he shot, and as they flew far on beyond him he cried out, "Run! run! for they are far ahead. Make haste!" That was the sign of danger upon which he had agreed with David. If he had cried, "This way! Go no further!" then his friend might have returned securely to the court. But this, "Run! make haste!" was the friendly counsel to fly. The boy, who knew nothing of the matter, brought back the arrow shot by his master, and since Jonathan saw that there was no danger of being seen, he sent him back with his bow and arrows to the city, but stayed behind himself till his friend should appear. Then David came from behind the heap of stones where he had lain concealed. It was a tender and a solemn greeting. Three times he threw himself upon the ground before his faithful friend. Then they embraced each other in silence. Their tears choked their utterance, until at last David burst into the most passionate cries of grief. It was so terrible for him to have to part with his friend, to part with everything he loved, and go — he knew not whither. At last Jonathan said to him, "Go in peace! Let the oath we both have sworn to Yahweh remain unbroken. May the bond of eternal friendship bind you to me, and your posterity to mine!" And thus they parted.

Before giving this story I mentioned in passing that it was inconsistent with the one that preceded it. For there Saul's hostility towards David was treated as a fact notorious to every one — to Jonathan amongst the rest — and bands of soldiers were sent to seize him. Here David has to open Jonathan's eyes to his father's change of disposition and the danger that threatens him. If both narratives were historical, therefore, we should have to reverse their order. But even this could not save them both, for this latter story is evidently meant for an account of the last farewell of the two friends. There is nothing left but to take these stories as two different accounts of the first outburst of Saul's suspicious hatred and the way in which David escaped from court. The latter story certainly bears the stamp of truth, but there is much that sounds natural and true in the other also. It is not of much consequence, however, that we should know exactly how Saul's fury first displayed itself.

Our stories evidently give a true account of the real cause of this fury itself. Saul, knowing as he did that many of his subjects were opposed to him, and that the prophets especially were now disaffected, naturally became suspicious. David was the darling of the people, and, as the story of his stay at Ramah indicates, stood high in favor with Samuel and his powerful following. Nothing was more natural, therefore, than that Saul, dissatisfied with himself, with the course that events were taking, and with the party of the prophets, should presently have yielded to his own suspicions, given the reins to his violent and passionate nature, and plotted against the life of his too successful son-in-law.

Jonathan's friendship was certainly not displayed exactly as our narrator would have us believe. For he makes him foresee that David is to become king, and even beg him to spare his posterity when that time should come. The writer himself knew the course that events had actually taken, and therefore — with small knowledge of human nature — placed these anticipations in the mouth of Jonathan. But in reality neither Jonathan nor David could have known beforehand that the latter would become king. Nay, if David had intended to aim at the crown, he would have been acting most dishonorably both towards Saul and Jonathan his heir. Nor must we be content to form an unnatural conception of Jonathan himself. A story is elsewhere told us[1] of his coming to David some time after open hostilities between him and Saul had broken out, and saying, "My father will never get you into his power, but you will become the king of Israel, and I shall be next to you in the kingdom. My father knows this well." This is incredible. Why should Jonathan have voluntarily resigned the throne to David? Surely it is much more natural to suppose that he believed with all his heart in the innocence of his friend, and in his loyalty to his father the king. Regarded in this light his conduct is still noble, while David's perfect confidence in his friend argues well for the characters of both.

Let us now consider the conduct of Jonathan once more. He undertakes the difficult and dangerous task of a peacemaker; he dares to speak a word on behalf of his absent friend to his infuriated father; he aids him in his escape, at the risk of being accused of high treason, in which case even his life would no longer be safe from such a man as Saul. And he does all this out of love to one who had given no proof

[1] 1 Samuel xxiii. 16–18.

as yet of any sinister design; but whose extraordinary success in war, whose marriage with the king's daughter, and whose popularity alike with the people and the prophets might well make him a formidable subject at some future time. But love thinks no evil, believes and hopes all things. We may think of Jonathan, after David's flight, endeavoring to console himself for the absence of his friend by carrying his thoughts on into the future. He saw himself on the throne of Israel, and David, his bosom friend, at his side. He thought how they would rush together to battle with the uncircumcised, while no ignoble jealousies wasted the strength of Israel, and they two, with united powers, raised the people to greatness. He foresaw not — it is well for man that the future is veiled from him — that the hour of his father's death was to be his own last hour too, and that only one of his sons would reap the fruits of his generous friendship, and — eat the bread of charity at David's table.

Chapter XXIX.

SAUL PERSECUTES DAVID.

1 Samuel XXI. 1–10*a*, XXII. 1–XXIII. 15, XXIII. 19–XXVII. 4.

DAVID had now no course but instant flight, for a moment's delay might cost him his life. Accordingly he fled, as might have been expected, southwards towards Bethlehem, and came to Nob, not far from Jebus (or Jerusalem). At this place there was a temple, consecrated to Yahweh, at which a certain Ahimelech, the son of Ahitub, did duty as chief priest. Now when this Ahimelech saw David drawing near he went to meet him trembling. "The king's son-in-law!" he said to himself, "what can that mean?" For messengers from court were seldom bearers of good news any more than the prophets were. "How come you here alone and unattended?" he asked in amazement; and without a moment's hesitation David answered, "The king has sent me on secret business. I have told my men to meet me elsewhere. Pray give me four or five loaves of bread, or whatever else you happen to have, as quickly as possible." The priest was ready enough to help him, but he had no common bread at hand; all he had was the shew-bread, which was reserved for

the special use of the priests. However, he said he would give him even this if his followers were not unclean. "Never fear!" answered David, keeping up the falsehood, "we were all clean when we started from home." Thus reassured Ahimelech gave him the bread. But David was not yet content. "Have you a sword or spear by you?" he asked, "for the king's business was so urgent that I had no time even to snatch up a weapon." "We have no weapons here," answered the priest, "except the sword of Goliath, whom you slew. It is hanging up, wrapped in a cloth, behind the *ephod*." "That is the very thing!" cried David. "There is not another like it on earth! Give it me at once!" Thus provided with the sword and the loaves of bread, the fugitive pursued his way.

He took refuge near Bethlehem, in a rocky stronghold probably formed by a cave. This place was almost inaccessible, and could easily be defended. It was called the cave of Adullam. Here David soon collected a number of followers. They consisted in the first place of nearly all his own relatives, for now that he was out of favor his family feared, or had perhaps already felt, the wrath of Saul. Besides these there were certain malcontents who were dissatisfied with Saul's rule, hopeless debtors and refugees of every description. Altogether they made up a troop of about four hundred men, and they all acknowledged David as their leader and threw in their lot with his. But their position was a very wretched one. How could they hope in the long run to escape the sword of Saul? And how were they to live meanwhile? David saw all the dangers that surrounded him, and his first care was for his parents. At their time of life they could never bear the privations and perils of a bandit's life. So, regardless of the risk he ran, he secretly crossed the Jordan, just by Jericho, alone or accompanied only by one or two special friends, and begged the king of Moab to receive and protect his parents until his own affairs should take a favorable turn. The prince, who was of course no friend to Saul, seized this opportunity of laying an obligation on so valiant and renowned an opponent of his neighbor, and willingly granted the request. The aged pair were then brought with all speed to Moab, and placed in safety there. It was not a moment too soon; for David himself could now no longer remain near Bethlehem. It was too close to Gibeah.

It may be asked why David himself did not seek refuge

with the Moabites or Philistines, and indeed we shall see that he was compelled to do so in the end. But we may well believe that such a course was looked on in those days as a last and desperate resource. Even now it is hard enough for any one to be compelled to leave his country, though he can easily become the citizen of another land. Our manners and customs are not so very different from those of other civilized peoples, and we soon feel more or less at home amongst them. We find much the same style of life as our own, and what is more, the same religious wants, and substantially the same modes of meeting them in all the most highly civilized countries. We find Christianity everywhere. But in ancient times this was not so. Each country was a little world in itself, and was cut off by an almost impassable barrier from everything that lay outside. If any one moved from the land of the Israelites into that of the Syrians, the Phœnicians, the Philistines, or even the kindred tribes of Moab or of Edom, he was transported into an entirely new world, in which, for many reasons, he could never feel at home, most of all because he found a strange religion there. For Yahweh was worshipped in Canaan, but nowhere else; and whoever left the land bid farewell to his god, and lost all that made him an Israelite.[1] And this was why the crime of stealing an Israelite — to sell him as a slave into a foreign land of course — was punished by death.[2] But for a warrior such as David there was another and a special difficulty in living anywhere but in Canaan. Of course no friend of Saul would think of receiving him, and an enemy of Israel would insist upon his making war upon his own people, and so breaking with them for ever. And this, of course, David was unwilling to do.

As long as it was in any way possible, therefore, he remained in his own land. We must remember, too, that he had many friends at court, who kept him informed of what was going on there. It is only natural to suppose that these friends belonged to the party of the prophets; and we know that at any rate on one occasion a certain prophet of the name of Gad came to David in the stronghold of Adullam, and warned him that Saul was preparing to attack him there, and that he would do well to change his present place of refuge for some other. Upon hearing this David hastened further south into Judah.

It is not much that escapes the eyes of a king, how-

[1] 1 Samuel xxvi. 19. [2] Exodus xxi. 16; Deuteronomy xxiv. 7.

ever. Saul knew well enough that some of his courtiers were in communication with David, and his indignation knew no bounds. Once, as he was sitting under the tamarisk at Gibeah, with his spear in his hand and all his courtiers about him, he looked darkly round upon them, and his suspicious glance rested first upon this captain or minister then upon that. "Listen to me, you Benjamites!" he broke out at last. "Are you so sure that Jesse's son will give you corn-lands and vineyards as I have done, and make you all captains of thousands and of hundreds? Why should you all conspire against me? Why did not a single one of you tell me that my own son upheld that wretched man? Have none of you any pity left for me, that you never told me how my son was stirring up my subject to lay snares for me? Yet so it is." The reproach was received in silence; but a certain Doeg, an Edomite, the overseer of Saul's mules, was present. He happened, by an accident, to have witnessed David's interview with Ahimelech, for he was shut up in the sanctuary at the time, "before Yahweh's face," perhaps on account of leprosy, or some other cause of uncleanness upon which the priests had to decide. This Doeg now came forward and took advantage of what he had seen at Nob to curry favor with the king by defaming Ahimelech. He told him how the priest had given David provisions and Goliath's sword, and by way of improving the story a little added that he had consulted the oracle for him. Alas for Ahimelech! Saul leapt up from his seat on hearing Doeg's words. He could well believe that David had been helped by a priest, for he was such a favorite with prophets, priests, Nazarites, and all such men! Ahimelech and all the priests at whose head he stood were summoned at once before the king. "Listen to me, thou son of Ahitub!" thundered Saul. "I await my liege's commands," answered the trembling priest, who drew no comfort from the looks or tones of the infuriated monarch. But he was filled with utter dismay when he heard the words, "Why do you plot with Jesse's son against me? What need had you to give him bread, to give him a sword, to consult the very oracle for him, and make him a rebel against me, as he is this day?" Ahimelech, who had never heard a word of this before, could scarcely believe his ears. "What!" he gasped, "David! Which of all your servants was more loyal than he — the king's son-in-law, the captain of the body-guard,[1]

[1] After an amended version.

the most honored man at court? But who accused me of having dared to consult the oracle for him? Never! O my King, lay not this charge upon me or upon my house, for I never heard of it till now." But all this went for nothing with Saul. "Ahimelech," he answered, "you must die, with all your house." And he pronounced their sentence on the spot; for turning to his body-guard he said, "The priests of Yahweh have joined in helping David. They knew that he was flying from me, and they never told me they had seen him. Surround them, and strike them dead." But not one of the lifeguards stirred. The sentence was so glaringly unjust, and the person of a priest was sacred. Boiling with rage, and steeling himself against all pity, Saul now cried to Doeg, "Do you slay them then!" And here he found a ready tool. Ere long five-and-eighty priests, who bore the *ephod*, lay slain by Doeg's sword, while the murderer and his satellites hastened to Nob to carry out the king's sentence there also, and lay both man and beast under the ban.

Only one single priest, Abiathar, the son of Ahimelech, escaped the slaughter. He fled to David, and told him how all the priests of Yahweh had been slain at Saul's command. David was smitten to the heart, and cried, "I feared that Doeg would take word to Saul. And now it is I who have caused the death of all your house. But do you stay with me and fear not, for henceforth your lot is inseparably bound up with mine, and I will protect you." Abiathar had the *ephod* with him, so that David was henceforth able to consult Yahweh.

An occasion for doing so soon arose. As David was wandering about the desert of Judah with his men, the Philistines made an incursion into the district of the Israelitish city Keilah, plundering its granaries and driving off a great quantity of cattle. When the news reached David his blood boiled in his veins. The Philistines in Yahweh's heritage! How often had he smitten them at the head of the troops of Saul, and must he now look on while they vexed Israel unavenged? He told Abiathar to consult the oracle, and was commanded to set out and chastise the Philistines. But his followers murmured and said, "We are scarcely safe here ourselves. What are the raids of the Philistines to us?" To overcome their scruples he consulted Yahweh once again, and still received the answer, "Go forth, for I will deliver the Philistines into your hand." Upon this all opposition died away, and the free-

booters followed their chief with enthusiasm. David led to victory as usual. The Philistines felt the weight of his hand once more, and ere long the delighted inhabitants of Keilah welcomed him as their deliverer within their walls, together with all the cattle he had recovered. But when Saul heard of this his heart was glad. "Now God has put him into my power," he said, "for he has shut himself up in a fortified city." He instantly summoned his army to besiege David and his men in Keilah. But David heard what he was doing, and consulted his god again. "O Yahweh, God of Israel," he asked, "is it true that Saul is coming up against Keilah to besiege it?" "It is," was the reply. "And will the rulers of Keilah give me up to him?" Again the oracle said "Yes;" upon which David and his followers, who were now six hundred in number, left the city. On hearing this, Saul stayed his march, for when David was in the desert, looking for him was a search in the dark! Such were the advantages derived by David from having Abiathar to consult the oracle for him. For some time after these events he continued to wander about in the desert, nor could Saul ever lay hands on him.

The district that lay between the Dead Sea and the eastern and southern slopes of the mountain land of Judah was called the desert of Judah. But we are not to understand under this word a great sandy plain, for the district in question was nothing of the kind. What the Israelites meant by the word generally translated "desert" or "wilderness," was a district rendered, for the most part, unfit for cultivation by want of water or otherwise, and only furnishing fodder for cattle during certain months of the year, when the water-courses that the rainy season had filled had not yet run dry. "Pasture land," or rather "steppe," or "highlands," would, therefore, be quite as good a translation as "desert." This "desert of Judah," then, was a most inhospitable region. Its waste and craggy surface was only here and there relieved by a village or a group of hovels. Huge rocks, pierced by caves in which the wild beasts made their homes — large enough, in some instances, to conceal hundreds of marauders — made the district dangerous to the last degree. These rocks, with the brushwood that covered everything, and the hard, dry soil, gave the whole region such a fantastic and forbidding aspect that superstition drew abundant food from it, and, not unnaturally, peopled the whole place with demons and hobgoblins. Now, this was just the place to afford a refuge to one in David's circumstances, for there were so many places of concealment in

it that it was almost impossible to track a fugitive through it. So he wandered about hither and thither in the desert of Ziph, or in the district variously known as the desert of Maon, of Engedi, or of Tekoa.

The following story gives us some idea of the mode in which a band of freebooters, such as David commanded, gained a subsistence[1]: —

In the desert of Maon there dwelt at that time a certain man called Nabal. He was treated with great respect, because he was very rich. On his pasture lands, and in his folds on the neighboring Mount Carmel, he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. But he was a surly and wicked man, by descent a Calebite. His wife, Abigail, on the other hand, was equally discreet and beautiful. Now it so happened that this Nabal held a sheep-shearers' feast at his country-house on Mount Carmel at a time when David had established himself in the neighborhood. When David heard of this, he sent ten of his followers to greet him, and to ask him for a present. He thought he had a right to make this request, for not only had he and his men refrained from injuring the flocks and herds of Nabal, but they had even defended them, day and night, from robbers and beasts of prey. Any decent or sensible man would have seen that the request was altogether reasonable, and — in his own interest, if for no other cause — would have made the powerful freebooters some present. But Nabal was drunk when David's messengers arrived, and he answered churlishly, "What do I know of this David? What is this son of Jesse to me? We have turbulent rogues enough in the country! Am I to give these fellows my bread and wine and meat, when I don't so much as know where they come from?" The messengers brought back this answer to David, who received it with the utmost indignation, and immediately called his men to arms. Four hundred of them were soon upon the march, while two hundred stayed with the baggage.

Meanwhile one of Nabal's servants had told Abigail what had happened. He told her, too, what kindness they had all experienced from David and his men. He was afraid that they would have to pay full dearly for his master's words; but then he was such a son of Belial that it was no use speaking to him! Abigail knew too well the truth of what the slave had said, and therefore she determined to do what she could to avert the danger herself, without saying a word to Nabal. Her mind was soon made up. She had her beast

[1] 1 Samuel xxv.

saddled, without her husband's knowledge, and packed a great quantity of provisions, such as bread, wine, meat, parched corn, and raisins, upon asses, which were driven before her. It was well that she had acted as she did! For David, burning with rage at the ill return his goodness to Nabal had met, was approaching with four hundred men, and was already hard by Carmel when she met him. No sooner had his uncouth band come up to her than she alighted from her beast, made a profound obeisance, and greeted the angry bandit with the gentle words: "Lay all the guilt on me, my lord! But trouble not yourself about this worthless Nabal. For he is what he is named — a fool [*nabal* means "fool"]. And I knew not of your message. And now, as Yahweh lives, who holds you back from staining your hands with blood, may all your enemies be as Nabal! See, here is a present that your handmaid brings for your followers. Forgive my sin, for Yahweh will build you up a lasting house, because you wage his wars, and none can lay any evil to your charge. When any one persecutes you, Yahweh shall hold your life safe in the band of the living, but your enemies shall be swung round like a stone in the slinger's thong.[1] And when Yahweh has fulfilled all his promises and made you prince of Israel, let not the thought that you have shed innocent blood rise up to trouble you and weigh down your heart! And when Yahweh blesses you, then remember me!"

Her flattering words succeeded in their purpose, for David exclaimed at once: "Praised be Yahweh who sent you to meet me! A blessing on your courage! A blessing on you for preventing me from shedding blood and becoming my own avenger! For as sure as Yahweh lives, had you not met me here I would not have left a creature in Nabal's house alive by morning." So saying, he accepted the present, and Abigail returned with the reassuring promise that none of her household should suffer any harm.

When she returned, Nabal's feast — and a royal banquet it was! — was at its height. He himself was dead drunk and noticed nothing. But in the morning when he had slept it off and his wife told him what she had done the evening before, he almost died of vexation. Ten days afterwards "Yahweh smote Nabal, and he died." When David heard this he took it as a sign that Yahweh himself had avenged his insult, and thanked his god all the more fervently for having prevented him from avenging himself. The single interview he had had

[1] After an amended version.

with Abigail had made such a deep impression on him that he sent messengers at once to ask her in marriage. When she received his message she bowed down twice to the earth in grateful recognition of the honor he had shown her, and declared her readiness to accompany his messengers in the humble words: "I am ready. I will be the slave to wash the feet of my master's servants." Accompanied by five female slaves she followed David's messengers, and became his wife. He also took to wife a certain Ahinoam of Jezreel — a place in the same neighborhood, most likely; but Saul had given his first wife Michal to a Benjamite of the name of Phalti.

Thus did David and his men live by their swords, now protecting the flocks of their neighbors, now escorting merchants through the desert for a reward, and sometimes, doubtless, when driven by necessity, levying black mail on the district. It was a hard and anxious life. It is true that they seemed tolerably safe from pursuit, the place was so wild and mountainous, and the rocks so full of holes and caverns; but after all, their lives were in constant danger, for a price was set upon their heads. On one occasion, David all but fell into the hands of Saul, for the inhabitants of the desert of Ziph, in which he happened to be, had gone of their own accord to Saul and offered to guide his troops. Their perfect familiarity with all the lurking places in the neighborhood made escape almost impossible. One by one they cut off all the passes, till at last the freebooters were so completely surrounded that only a single hill separated them from their pursuers. They would inevitably have fallen into their hands had not sudden news of an incursion of Philistines compelled Saul to relinquish the pursuit for the moment. Hence this rock was called "the rock of the escape."[1]

But no sooner was Saul again at liberty than he collected three thousand picked warriors, and led them to the desert of Engedi to track out David. But this time he was to stay his pursuit for a very different reason from his last. He happened once to enter a cave for a moment, apart from his men. Little did he think that his life hung upon a thread, and that David was standing with his drawn sword behind him! Yet so it was. Concealed in the ample cave was the whole band which he was pursuing. As soon as Saul had entered, David's men said to their chief, in signs more than in words: "Now is the day on which Yahweh fulfils his promise and gives over your enemy to you. Do to him what

[1] 1 Samuel xxiii. 19-28.

you will." David rose and crept up to Saul — but only to cut off the hem of his outer garment. Thus Saul was spared; but as soon as he had gone on his way again no small discontent was expressed within the cavern. David was deeply moved. A host of conflicting emotions rushed through his soul. He had stood behind his enemy with his sword drawn. A single blow would have put an end to his own sufferings and those of his men. He had held back his hand, and it was still unstained by royal blood; Yahweh had preserved him from this sin. But murmurs rose against him on every side. His men were profoundly dissatisfied. The life they led was so hard, and he might so easily have rescued them from it! To all this he had but one answer, "God forbid that I should lay my hand upon the king; for he is Yahweh's anointed!"

But Saul must know how little he really had to fear from David. So the latter made all speed to follow him, called to him, and when he turned round bowed down in reverence to the earth. "Why do you give ear," he cried, "to the calumnies of those who say that I plot mischief against you? Now you may see with your own eyes that it is not true. For in the cave hard by I might have killed you; but I spared your life, for you are Yahweh's anointed. See, here is the hem of your mantle which I cut off. Acknowledge, then, my father, that I harbor no evil thoughts against you in my heart. May Yahweh judge between us! Is not the proverb true that says 'From evil men come evil deeds?' At least there comes no plot against your life from me. Alas! who am I that the king of Israel should chase me? I am but a dead dog! I am but a flea! May Yahweh protect me against you!" Saul — passionate and impressible as he was — burst into tears when he heard these words. "Is it really you David, my son?" he cried. "In truth you are a better man than I. You might have killed me and you did it not. The proverb says, 'If a man meet his enemy in the way will he let him pass by unhurt?' but yet you spared me when Yahweh put me into your power. Now I am sure that you will be king after me, and that your family will keep the throne of Israel after you. Swear to me, then, that you will not root out my family when that time comes." David promised with an oath, and then each of them went his way, Saul to Gibeah, and David to his cave in the desert.

The statement that David returned to his place of concealment contrasts oddly with his solemn oath to Saul not to root

out his posterity; but then this certain knowledge on the part of Saul that David would succeed him on the throne is as incredible as that Jonathan, in whose mouth the same prophecy is put,[1] should have foreseen the fact, or that David himself should have known it. The narrator, who knew the actual result himself, involuntarily assumed the same knowledge on the part of the actors whom he brought upon the stage, without thinking of the false and impossible positions in which they would have been placed had they really had any such foreknowledge.

The story that David once spared the life of Saul, when the latter was pursuing him, rests upon an old and apparently trustworthy tradition. It appears in another form as follows[2]: —

When David was in the desert of Ziph, the inhabitants of the district promised Saul that they would hand him over to him, for they knew where he was hiding. With three thousand chosen men Saul undertook the expedition, and was soon encamped close by the spot where his enemy was to be found. But at night no sentinels were set to guard the camp, and David, who had learned from his spies where Saul was lying, managed to pass the barricades and approach his sleeping father-in-law. His cousin, Abishai, Joab's brother, accompanied him on his perilous adventure. Saul lay quietly sleeping in the midst of his warriors. His lance was driven into the ground at his head. "God has given your enemy into your hand," whispered Abishai. "Shall I run him through with his own lance and pin him to the ground? One blow will do it!" But David held back his companion, who had already stretched out his hand to seize Saul's spear. "Do him no injury," he said, "for who would bring upon his head the guilt of slaying Yahweh's anointed? As sure as Yahweh lives," he continued, "Yahweh will bring Saul into some calamity, and his hour will come, in battle or some way else. But Yahweh forbid that I should lay my hand on him! Take his spear and cruse of water with you, and let us go!" It was no sooner said than done. They escaped from the camp unobserved, for "a sleep of Yahweh" had come over Saul and his men. Then David took his stand upon a hill, prudently keeping a considerable distance between himself and the royal troops, and shouted till he waked the general Abner and all the people. "Who is it," exclaimed Abner, "that dares to disturb the king?" "Why,

[1] See p. 512. [2] 1 Samuel xxvi.

Abner!" answered David mockingly, "what a man you are! Where is your like in Israel? Why have you kept no better watch over the king? There has been some one into the camp to murder him! By Yahweh, you have done ill in not protecting the anointed of Yahweh better! But now, send a soldier for the king's lance and water-flask that lay at his head." Saul too had heard what passed, and recognized the voice of David in the darkness. "Is not that you, my son David?" he cried. "It is, O King," was the reply. "Why do you persecute me thus? What evil have I done? Nay, do but hear me! If it is Yahweh himself who stirs you up against me, then propitiate him with a sacrifice. But if it is the work of men, may they be cursed by Yahweh, for they are driving me out of his heritage and forcing me to go elsewhere and to serve other gods. Oh, let not my blood be poured out before Yahweh's face! And, after all, what am I that Israel's king should pursue me? I am but a partridge hunted on the hills!" Saul was completely melted, and replied, "I have greatly erred. Come with me home. After what has now befallen me I can never injure you again." But David did not think it prudent to comply. He begged Saul to send for the lance and the flask, and then went his way with the words: "Yahweh will reward every man for his deserts. I have shown that I, at least, will do nothing against the anointed of Yahweh. As your life has been precious in my sight this day, so shall my life be precious to Yahweh, and he will rescue me in every time of need." Saul, on his side, took leave with the exclamation, "Blessed be thou, David, my son! It cannot be but that prosperity and power await thee!" After this he returned to his home.

It is evident that the writer gives his own interpretation of subsequent events in the last words he puts into the mouths of Saul and David. He believes that Yahweh protected David as a reward for his generous conduct towards Saul. In other respects this story is far more probable than the other. At any rate, it is much easier to form a definite conception of what is told us here. The two stories agree, however, in the main point. Not only do they both represent David as having spared the life of Saul, but they both attribute his doing so to his reverence for Yahweh's anointed.

But although Saul was overcome for the moment by David's generosity, although the exile's friends pleaded his cause whenever they dared to do so, although Jonathan's words had doubtless great weight with his father at certain seasons, yet

his suspicions constantly recurred, and fits of furious passion ever urged him on to form fresh plans of vengeance, and drew from his lips such dire curses on his disaffected subjects, above all on David and those who supported him, that a permanent reconciliation was impossible. Saul continued to be David's enemy all his life. We cannot tell how long the fugitive maintained himself in the desert of Judah; but the period must certainly be counted by months rather than years. It would be hard enough for him to find sustenance for himself and his men even for a few months. And then the sword was ever hanging over his head. How easily some traitor might make interest with the king by betraying him! If Saul was really determined to seize him, he was sure to succeed, sooner or later. So he was compelled at last, though sore against his will, to leave his country and throw himself into the arms of the Philistines — the only neighboring people capable of defending him. Accordingly he crossed the border and made his way to Gath, where he placed himself at the service of king Achish. When Saul heard of this he was obliged to relinquish all intention of pursuing him further.

We shall soon return to David, in the land of the Philistines; but first we must speak of the last days of Saul.

Chapter XXX.

THE LAST HOURS OF SAUL.

1 Samuel XXVIII. 3–25, XXXI.[1]

THIS is the account given us of Saul's last hours and death: —

Some months after the time of public mourning for the death of Samuel had come to an end, the Philistines brought their troops into the field again and pitched at Shunem, while Saul took up his position on the hills of Gilboa. But when he saw the hostile army his courage failed him for the first time in his life. He longed for an oracle to restore his confidence as to the result of the battle; but, alas! his desire could not be satisfied, for Yahweh refused to answer him. In vain the dreamers lay upon the consecrated spots, for the

[1] 1 Chronicles x.

deity would not reveal himself to them. The priest could gain no glimpse into the future by *urim and thummim*. None of the prophets were inspired, and the music of the harp and the rumbling of the drum alike failed to bring down the spirit of Yahweh upon them. Clearly the god was unpropitious, and no sacrifice availed to procure his favor. The thought weighed upon the heart of Saul like lead. He saw fear in the looks of the followers, and on the faces of some of those lifeguards who had refused to slay the priests of Yahweh he read the thought, "This is what it has brought us to!" At last he could bear it no longer, and determined to learn the future, let it cost what it might! So he asked some of the friends whom he trusted most whether they could find out a witch for him.

Find out a witch for Saul to consult! Then has it come to this? Was it not Saul who, in very zeal for Yahweh, persecuted the practisers of heathen arts even to death? And is he now brought so low that he himself calls magic to his aid?

His followers can find a witch for him. North of Gilboa, between it and Tabor, lay Endor. In one of the houses of this place, or perhaps in a cave hard by, lived such a woman as they wanted. On hearing this, Saul, accompanied by two of his faithful servants, went to the spot by night, and in disguise. He asked the witch to consult her soothsaying spirit for him, and to call up from the grave the dead man whom he should name to her. At first the woman hesitated to comply, for Saul had forbidden the practice of witchcraft upon pain of death; but when the stranger swore an oath by Yahweh that she should suffer no harm if she granted his request, she consented, and asked him who the dead man was that he wished her to bring up from the world below. "Samuel," answered he.

Then the woman began to prepare her charms and to mutter her incantations,[1] retiring for the purpose, it would seem, into a separate room, or behind a partition that marked off a portion of the cave by the mouth of a cleft in the rock, supposed to be a passage to the world below. Suddenly she shrieked aloud, "You have deceived me! You are Saul himself!" "Fear not," answered the king, deeply moved, "but tell me what you see." "A spirit is rising from the depth," answered she. "What is he like?" asked Saul again. "An old man wrapped in a mantle," said the witch. Then Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and overcome with

[1] Compare Isaiah viii. 19, xxix. 4.

awe he bowed down twice to do him homage. And lo! a voice as from the grave fell upon his ear, and Samuel asked, "Why have you broken my rest in the grave? Why have you brought me here?" "Because I am in sore distress," groaned Saul, "for the Philistines wage war against me, and Yahweh answers me not — neither by prophets nor by dreams. So I have called on you for help. Tell me what I am to do." But he fell to the ground, and his soul died within him, when he heard the words, "Why do you question me, when Yahweh has departed from you and has taken the side of your neighbor David?[1] For Yahweh gives to him the kingdom that he takes from you, according to my words. This day does Yahweh requite you for your disobedience in the war with Amalek, when you refused to execute his wrath. And for your sin Yahweh gives up Israel into the hand of the Philistines, and — to-morrow you and your sons shall be with me."

The apparition vanished, and Saul lay stretched upon the ground. Terror had laid hold upon his heart, and Samuel's words had crushed him utterly. Moreover he had eaten nothing, through sheer anxiety, all the last day and night. The witch now tried to bring him to himself again. "My king," she said, "I have risked my very life to grant your wish. And now do you, in your turn, grant my request, and eat and drink something before you go." He long refused, but at last he yielded to the persistent entreaties of his followers, and accepted the woman's urgent invitation. He rose from the ground, and sat down upon her bed. She hastened to slaughter her fatted calf, prepared the meat, baked some unleavened bread, and set the repast before Saul and his attendants, who ate of what she had prepared and then went on their way.

Next day the Philistines began the attack, and put the Israelites to flight. The hills were soon covered with the bodies of the slain. Saul and his chosen band still manfully held their own; but one by one the king's three sons, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishuah fell. Saul himself still struck down all who came within his reach. But at last a band of the enemy's archers drew near; their arrows whistled through the air, and the royal hero fell — pierced through the bowels.[2] He felt that he was mortally wounded, and cried to his shield-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, that the uncircumcised may not come and mock

[1] After an amended version.
[2] After an amended version of 1 Samuel xxxi. 3, and 1 Chronicles x. 3.

me." But his attendant stood appalled, and dare not raise his hand to strike him. Upon this Saul mustered all the little strength he had still left, and, with the weapon he held in his hand, gave himself his own death-blow. His shield-bearer would not survive his master, and fell upon his own sword.

Thus did Saul die a hero's death; but it was a fearful hour for Israel. The army was utterly defeated. The neighboring cities were deserted, for terror of the Philistines, and soon fell into the power of the enemy. Next day the victors, searching the battle-field for plunder, vented their rage on the lifeless bodies of Saul and of his sons. They cut off their heads, stripped the armor from their bodies, and bore these trophies of victory through all their cities with shouts of triumph, as a grateful spectacle to their gods and to their countrymen. Finally they hung up the arms as a consecrated gift in the temple of their goddess Astarte, while the headless trunks were nailed to the wall of the Israelitish city of Beth-shan, hard by the battle-field.

Thus even an honorable burial would have been denied to Saul and to his sons, had not the gratitude of faithful subjects secured them from this last indignity. On the other side of the Jordan, opposite Beth-shan, lay Jabesh. Saul's first great feat of arms had been the rescue of this city; and when the men of Jabesh heard what the Philistines had done to the body of their benefactor, it was more than they could bear. All their fighting men set off by night, crossed the Jordan, took down the corpses of Saul and his sons, and bore them hurriedly back to their own city. There they burned the bodies, apparently to secure them from any further outrage, and buried the bones under the terebinth of Jabesh. Then they observed a fast of seven days.

Such was the end of Saul.

To understand this story we must try to form a clear conception of the ideas entertained by the ancient Israelites concerning the lot of man beyond the grave. They had not yet conceived the hope of a continued life, or a return to life, after death. This seems very strange to us. For it is difficult for us to conceive of an earnest living piety united with the belief that all is over with man the moment he has breathed his last. We have grown so familiar with the idea that our better self survives, that we are apt to think it inseparable from true religion. It is indeed very closely

connected with it, and in fact grows out of it. Hence we often find expressions used by the Israelitish psalmists so full of joyful self-surrender to God and cheerful hope for the future that they seem to us almost necessarily to imply the expectation of a future life. Read the following outpouring of soul, for instance[1]: —

God is our refuge and our strength,
A help that fails not in time of trouble.
Therefore we fear not, though the earth should swing,
And the mountains tremble in the midst of the sea.
Let the foaming waters roar,
Let the mountains rock when the sea rages;
Yet Yahweh of hosts is with us,
Our fortress is Jacob's god.

The same spirit is breathed by the following song, incorrectly ascribed to David[2]: —

Yahweh, thou art my god!
Thee do I seek.
My soul thirsts after thee,
My flesh yearns toward thee,
As a parched land,
As a thirsty, waterless plain!
I long to see thy power and glory
As I have seen thee in thy sanctuary.
Because thy favor is better than life
My lips shall praise thee;
I will bless thee as long as I live,
I will lift my hands in thy name.
As though with the richest banquet, even so my soul is satisfied;
Therefore my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.
I think of thee in my bed;
Of thee in the watches of night.
For thou art my help;
In the shadow of thy wings I rejoice.
My soul hangs upon thee,
For thy right hand upholds me.

What a depth and earnestness of spiritual life breathes through these songs! Can such poets have believed, we ask involuntarily, that when they fell under the sword of their foes, or perished in a storm, or died of some disease, this life with God was at an end for ever? Was such the belief of the holy man who sang[3]: —

When my heart was bitter [because of the prosperity of the godless]
And my soul disturbed,
I was ignorant as a brute,
As a senseless thing before thee.
For I am always with thee;
Thou hast taken me by the right hand.
Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel
And afterwards lead me to glory.
I have none but thee in heaven,

[1] Psalm xlvi. 1–3, 7. [2] Psalm lxiii. 1–8. [3] Psalm lxxiii. 21–27.

I desire none other on earth!
Though my body and soul shall fail,
My rock and eternal heritage is God.
For behold! They perish who are far from thee.
Thou rootest out those who fall off from thee.
But for me it is joy to be near to God!
I set my trust on my lord, on Yahweh,
And will speak of all thy works.

What wonder if Christians have seen in such lines as these the expression of the hope of immortal life, and, interpreting them in this sense, have made use of them as hymns? Assuredly the piety that speaks through them has already overcome the fear of death, and must unconsciously lead up to the hope of everlasting life. But all this does not remove the fact that these same psalmists had no expectation of anything deserving the name of life after death.

The opinions of the Israelites concerning the state of the dead underwent no great alteration for ages, and remained almost unchanged till within the last two centuries before our era. We need therefore have no hesitation in calling witnesses to these beliefs from different periods, widely separated from each other in time, for in substance all antiquity was at one upon this point.

In the belief of the Israelite, then, deep down below the earth, nay, "under the sea and its inhabitants,"[1] lay the realm of shadows, also known as "the abyss," and "destruction." It was sometimes confounded, involuntarily and very naturally, with the grave, from which, however, it is essentially distinct. The name of this place is the word so incorrectly translated "hell" in our authorized version. It was —

"A land of darkness and deathlike shade,
A land as black as night,
Where all is pitch dark and confusion,
Where noon-day is as black as the night."[2]

In this kingdom of the dead "there is no action, nor understanding, nor knowledge, nor wisdom;"[3] God's wonders are unknown in that land of darkness and oblivion;[4] eternal silence reigns there;[5] and to glorify God is impossible.[6] Thus a poet writes[7]: —

Deliver my life, O Yahweh!
And save me for thy mercies' sake!
For after death none think of thee,
And who shall praise thee in the realm of the dead?

[1] Job xxvi. 5, 6. [2] Job x. 21, 22. [3] Ecclesiastes ix. 10.
[4] Psalm lxxxviii. 12. [5] Psalm xciv. 17.
[6] Psalm lxxxviii. 10–12, cxv. 17. [7] Psalm vi. 4, 5.

A prophet might now and then speak as though the dead could rise,[1] or as though the shades had some remembrance of their former lives, and could even recognize those that joined them;[2] but this was only the language of poetic imagery, and, as the passages already quoted show, it by no means proves that the Israelites seriously ascribed such powers to the inhabitants of the shadow-land. Again, the story of Saul and the witch at Endor makes Samuel speak just as he would have done when alive; but this only shows that the Israelites, like the ancient Greeks, believed in the possibility of restoring a kind of momentary life and consciousness to the shades, by means of magic. It by no means follows that they believed these shades to be always possessed of conscious life and memory.

The Israelite's belief in the justice of God and the recompense of virtue and vice stood in no kind of connection with his conception of the land of shadows. He did not think of a man's condition after death as in any degree dependent upon his conduct during life. The realm of the dead was "the place where all mortals meet together."[3] If the same lot sometimes befalls the righteous and the wicked even here,[4] far more is the state of all the same in the land of shadows.[5] "Every man goes to join the dead. For who is there that escapes? While there is life there is hope; and a living dog is better than a dead lion. For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing at all. And they have no reward any more, for the memory of them has perished. And their love and their hate and their envy have long since vanished, and to all eternity they have no share any more in all that is done beneath the sun."[6] In the same way the writer of this story of the witch makes the pious Samuel say to the king, whom he looks upon as forsaken of God, "To-morrow shall you and your sons be with me!"

In short, the condition of the dead may be indicated in a single word. Though God's eye, according to the outpourings of the poets, reaches even to the realm of shades,[7] yet "he thinks of its inhabitants no more, and they are cut off from his hand."[8]

The belief was general in ancient times that certain

[1] Isaiah xxvi. 19; Ezekiel xxxvii. 1–14. [2] Isaiah xiv. 10.
[3] Job xxx. 23. [4] Ecclesiastes ix. 2.
[5] Job iii. 16–19. [6] Ecclesiastes ix. 3b-6.
[7] Job xxvi. 5, 6; Proverbs xv. 11; Psalms cxxxix. 8. [8] Psalm lxxxviii. 5.

persons understood the art of calling up shades from the realms of the dead. Amongst the Israelites this belief was not confined to a few ignorant and therefore specially superstitious individuals, but, as far as we can make out, it was universal. It is true that Samuel and Saul persecuted these charmers of the dead, or *necromancers*, and forbade the practice of their arts, but this was not due to any disbelief in the powers of such witches and magicians, but to the idea that their arts were heathenish.[1] But when once these practices had been condemned, a great step had been made towards the discovery that they rested on the self-deception of a heated imagination or the deceit of deliberate imposture.[2]

In the story of the interview with the witch at Endor, we find ourselves, to a large extent, at any rate, in an atmosphere of fiction. It is impossible to form any reasonable and credible conception of what occurred. It has often been suggested that this woman was an impostor, that she recognized Saul by his promise that no harm should befall her, and that she was a good ventriloquist and imitated Samuel's voice — for it deserves notice that no one but the woman herself sees the shade. On this supposition it would be natural enough for her to put a gloomy prophecy into the mouth of Samuel, for she knew the position in which things stood, and might well suppose that when the leader was in such a frame of mind as that of Saul the army was almost certain to be defeated. In this way some of the main features of the story are made to appear credible. But, as a whole, it is still unexplained. For it is quite clear that the writer himself intended nothing of the kind suggested, but firmly believed in the reality of Samuel's appearance, or at any rate found nothing absurd in the idea. He intended to represent Samuel even after his death, as having once more called the past to the memory of Saul. He believed in necromancy just as completely as the writer of the legend of Joseph believed in the significance of dreams.[3] The fictitious character of the narrative is further evident from its making Samuel predict the result of the battle in such detail: "To-morrow shall you and your sons be with me!" This, at least, no enchantress, however sagacious, could have known beforehand. Moreover this story contains a reference to that of Saul's rejection by Yahweh; and since we saw reason to reject that as untrustworthy[4] the historical charac-

[1] See pp 450, 451.
[2] See pp. 272, 274.
[3] See pp. 207–210.
[4] See p. 487 ff.

ter of this falls with it. The writer evidently regarded Saul's tragic end as a manifestation of the avenging justice of Yahweh, who now exacted the penalty of former disobedience. But he did not reflect that even pious kings had often met with mournful deaths, and that many good and noble heroes had lost their lives on the battle-field.

Is there no truth at all in the story then? Is it not true, at least, that Saul in his despair sought aid of a necromancer? This is a very difficult question. The writer believed in magic himself, and would not think it any great enormity in Saul to have recourse to a witch when Yahweh would help him no longer. Such a course would appear to him quite natural. He intends the real stress of his narrative to fall upon the truth of the prediction which he puts into the mouth of Samuel. For Samuel himself, the judge whom Saul had superseded, the messenger of God who had foretold his fall, once more to appear in person and repeat his threats on the very eve of their fulfilment, would appear to the writer a most telling and impressive incident. And to secure this Samuel must rise from his grave, and therefore Saul must apply to a witch to raise him. On the other hand, it is far from impossible that Saul, in his despair, was really driven to a means of learning the future which he had himself condemned, though he no more thought of denying its efficacy than did any of his contemporaries.

Our final estimate of Saul will be but little affected whether we accept or reject this journey to Endor as a fact. For a single despairing action is no great evidence against a man. Saul excites our deepest interest. Hardly anywhere else in the Bible do we feel that the hero of a tragedy has passed before us so strongly as in the history of Saul. Of noble form and fiery spirit, religious by nature and inspired by a heartfelt love of his people, courageous and enterprising, he rose as Israel's deliverer and as a zealous servant of Yahweh. But this friend of Samuel, who vindicates the severity of the religious laws, builds altars to Yahweh, strives to exterminate the Canaanites, and chastises all heathen practices, gradually becomes such a bitter foe of Yahweh's messengers that one who finds himself in company where he is utterly out of place comes to be called a "Saul among the prophets." Gradually all the powers of his impulsive and commanding spirit became the slaves of suspicion and hatred, till, in the murder of the priests of Nob, and the stubborn persecution of David, we see what the man had by slow degrees become!

Like every one else who degenerates morally, Saul had himself to blame for his fall, for he had failed to bridle his unruly passions. But there are many extenuating circumstances in his case. We have seen already[1] that he was torn two ways by the dictates of political sagacity on the one hand which urged him to compromise and trim the question of Israel's relations with the heathen, and by his own conscience on the other which drove him to the uncompromising zeal that speaks in deeds of blood. Even when a man is mistaken in his conception of what God demands from him, he never grows better by silencing his conscience and listening to the dictates of prudence. But neither are the prophets and their party altogether free from the guilt of Saul's degeneracy. Fanatics are difficult to work with. As soon as Samuel's friends perceived that Saul was no longer their tool in everything, they began to oppose him; for the least hesitation in maintaining Yahweh's fiercest ordinances was in their eyes desertion of his cause. It was not without reason, therefore, that Saul grew so suspicious. His belief, for instance, that the priests of Yahweh were assisting David, was certainly not unfounded. Priests, Nazarites, and prophets alike desired the downfall of the ruling prince, and surely many of them had already fixed their eyes in eager expectation upon Jesse's son, and hoped that he would make a better king than Saul.

Chapter XXXI.

DAVID AT ZIKLAG AND AT HEBRON.

1 Samuel XXVII. 5–XXVIII. 2, XXIX. XXX.; 2 Samuel I. 1–V. 3.

WHEN last we spoke of David[2] he and his troop had just entered the service of Achish, king of Gath, because they could no longer maintain themselves upon Saul's territory. We shall now see something of David's life as a vassal of the Philistines. But first I must just mention another story,[3] which tells us that David sought refuge with Achish when first he fled from Saul. No sooner had he come to Gath, the story goes on to say, than he was instantly recognized by the court-

[1] See pp. 492, 493, 500, 501. [2] See pp. 526, 527. [3] 1 Samuel xxi. 10–15.

iers of Achish, who told their prince that this was "the king of the land," the man in whose honor the women had sung—

> "Saul has laid his thousands low,
> But David his ten thousands."

So when David saw that he was recognized, he pretended to be mad, and was therefore driven away by the king. This story is a string of improbabilities. In the first place a Philistine city could only be the very last refuge of a man in David's circumstances. In the next place, how could he have imagined for a single moment that he would not be recognized at Gath? And lastly, the Philistines can scarcely have been so stupid as to be taken in by so dull a trick! The origin of the story is not known. It may possibly have been intended to supersede other traditions with reference to David's stay with Achish, and thus to wash out a stain from his memory.

These other traditions we still possess, though they do not appear to come much nearer the truth than the one we have given. They represent David as having been guilty of the grossest cruelty and deception in his anxiety to make his own life and that of his followers as safe as possible. To seek favor at the court of Achish meant to become the subject of his people's enemy; and since hostilities between the Philistines and Israelites never ceased, David would certainly be required to turn his arms against his own countrymen. Indeed he might be expected to prove his fidelity to his new lord by displaying special zeal in this war. But by doing so he would have broken with his people for ever, and he loved them too well to be prepared for this. So in order that he might remain in the land of the Philistines, without being compelled to injure his own people, he begged Achish to assign some provincial town to him and to his men as a residence, for it was not fitting, he said, that he should remain in the capital. Achish, who seems to have been very credulous, approved of the suggestion, and assigned the town of Ziklag to him. From this place David made frequent marauding expeditions. Many of his turbulent followers were probably incapable of any occupation except that of bandits, and could not have been kept quiet without some such employment. But we are told that David never turned his arms against his own countrymen, but always attacked and plundered some district south of the land of the Philistines, where the allies of this people, and the enemies of Israel, were settled. And when he came to pay his respects to Achish and offer him a portion of the booty, Achish

would ask whether he had been making another raid, and David would answer that he had been attacking the men of Judah, or their allies the Jerahmeelites, and Kenites. To prevent his treachery from being exposed by fugitives, he used to slaughter all the inhabitants of the villages he plundered, without exception. This murderous precaution, coupled with the thinness of the population of those regions and the difficulty of communication, was so successful that for sixteen months the truth did not leak out. Achish had perfect confidence in his vassal, for he believed his falsehoods, and therefore imagined that he had made all friendship with his own people impossible for ever.

This story is in the highest degree improbable. Even on the supposition that no Philistines ever joined David on his expeditions, that Achish never required him to take part in his own operations, and that none of his men ever betrayed him, it is still incredible that for more than a year the route taken by David, the ravages he committed in the district south of Philistia, and the continued prosperity of the tribes he professed to have attacked and conquered, could have escaped notice. It is clear that if the writer really knew anything of David's life at Ziklag, he desired to conceal it; and we are therefore left almost entirely to our own conjectures in endeavoring to fill up the period between David's flight to Achish and the events we shall now relate.

When the war between the Philistines and the Israelites broke out with renewed violence, David's position became very difficult. For Achish summoned him to the field, together with his other subjects, and placed such implicit reliance in his professions of attachment that he actually made him captain of his lifeguard. But fortunately for David, Achish had not sole command of the army. The Philistine cities, Gath, Ekron, Askelon, Ashdod, and Gaza, which appear to have formed a sort of confederacy, were all governed by kings, and each of the five princes enjoyed equal rights with his fellows. Now when the allies of Achish noticed David and his men at the muster, they asked, "What are these Hebrews here for?" Achish answered that this was David, Saul's former subject, and that he had now been living in his territory for about a year without ever giving him the slightest cause of suspicion. But the other princes were distrustful, and insisted on Achish sending David back; for they thought he might seize this opportunity of reinstating himself in Saul's favor by turning his arms against them in the thick

of the battle. They felt no confidence in the man who had been celebrated in song as having "struck ten thousands down."

It was by no means a pleasant task for Achish, to have to inform the haughty warrior that his good faith was suspected, and that he could not be allowed to take part in the battle. He delivered his message with a profusion of apologies. David assumed a lofty tone, and inquired with an air of injured pride what offence he had committed that he should be deemed unworthy of fighting with the enemies of his lord. Upon this, Achish, fearing that he might seek some opportunity to take revenge, did his very best to pacify him, and assured him that he himself had unlimited confidence in him. So, while the Philistines advanced to the plain of Jezreel, David returned to Ziklag, which he reached once more three days after he had left it.

Here a terrible shock awaited him. A tribe of Amalekites, taking advantage of the absence of the fighting men, had fallen upon the city, plundered it, and set it on fire. They were more humane than David, however, and had not murdered any of the women and children, but had carried them all off as captives. As David's men stood by the ruins of their homes and thought of their wives and children, they burst into passionate cries of woe; and then, with the want of fairness characteristic of undisciplined natures in distress, they threw all the blame upon their leader, and began to mutter something about stoning him! David saw all, and was hard put to it; but the thought of Yahweh, his mighty helper, supported him. He ordered the priest Abiathar to attend him instantly with the *ephod*. As soon as he was ready, David asked Yahweh whether he should pursue the robbers. His god encouraged him to do so, and he set off at once with his six hundred men. But before long one-third of his force became so weary that they had to be left behind with the baggage near the stream of Besor. The remaining four hundred continued the pursuit. On their way they came upon an Egyptian slave of one of the Amalekites. His master had left him behind because he was sick, and he was lying half dead upon the ground when they found him; this Egyptian put them on the track. That same evening they overtook the Amalekites, who were carelessly enjoying themselves over their booty. They fell upon them and put them all to the sword, except four hundred, who mounted their camels and effected an escape. A great quantity of cattle, sheep, and

camels, together with all the prisoners, fell into the hands of David's men; so when they found that they had not to bewail the loss of a single member of their families, their sentiments towards their leader were completely reversed. They drove the cattle before them, shouting in triumph, "Here is David's spoil!" and his authority was more firmly established than ever.

He made a good use of his power when the four hundred who had followed him to the fight met the two hundred that had been left behind wearied out. For a dispute arose about the booty, some of the four hundred being unwilling to allow the two hundred any share in it at all. But David silenced them at once, and established a rule (which was observed by the Israelites ever afterwards) that those who went out to battle and those who defended the baggage should have equal shares of the booty. Thus David returned in triumph to Ziklag.

On the third day after his return from pursuing the robbers a certain man came to Ziklag, with his garments rent, and inquired for David. As soon as he was brought into his presence he prostrated himself in reverence before him, and waited for the famous warrior to give him leave to speak. "Whence do you come?" asked David. "I have escaped from the army of Israel," he replied. Escaped! David sprang to his feet in consternation when he heard that single word that said so much. "What do you mean? Speak out!" he hurriedly exclaimed. His anxious forebodings were but too well confirmed, for the stranger answered, "The army has fled. The slaughter was great. Saul and his son Jonathan are slain." David could scarcely believe his ears. The news was too terrible! Might it not after all be false? "How do you know," he asked, "that Saul and Jonathan are slain?" Upon which the other told him how he had happened to be crossing Mount Gilboa, and had there seen Saul leaning upon his spear, and the horsemen of the foe hard by. Saul, said he, had called to him, and had said, "Slay me, for I am seized with cramp,[1] and cannot defend myself, though I am still fully alive." He had granted the request, for he knew that Saul could not survive his defeat. "And see!" he concluded, "here are his armlets and the crown that was on his head. I have brought them to my lord." On hearing these words David rent his clothes, and all his companions followed his example. They spent the whole day weeping and fasting,

[1] After an amended version.

because Saul and Jonathan and the army of Yahweh and the whole house of Israel were smitten by the sword. In the evening, when the violence of the shock was in a measure passed, David sent for the messenger again, and asked, "Whence are you?" Hardly had he answered, "I am a stranger, an Amalekite," when David thundered forth the words, "And you dared to raise a hand against Yahweh's anointed!" A single word to one of his followers was enough, and the Amalekite fell dead upon the ground. He richly deserved his fate — at least, if most of his story was invented[1] for the sake of gaining David's favor. Over his body David pronounced the words, "You have drawn the sentence upon yourself, for you declared with your own mouth that you had slain Yahweh's anointed!"

The dirge in which David afterwards expressed his grief, we have already given in full as a striking testimony to the character of Saul.[2]

David must have received the news of the death of Saul with very mingled feelings. A certain joy, or at least a sense of relief, at the thought that he was delivered from his mortal foe, must surely have mingled with the grievous thought that his father-in-law, the deliverer of Israel, the glorious hero, the anointed of Yahweh, had met with so sad an end. But, whatever feelings were uppermost in his heart, no one can blame him for taking immediate advantage of Saul's death to relieve himself and his men from the critical position in which they were placed as subjects of the Philistine. The booty he had just seized from the Amalekites now stood him in good stead, for it enabled him at once to send rich presents to the elders of most of the cities of Judah; and when he had thus prepared the way, he lost no time in setting out at the head of his men, under the sanction of the oracle, for Hebron, the chief city of Judah. Here he was well received by the inhabitants, and before long deputies arrived from all parts of the south country, and anointed him king of Judah. This readiness to receive him was no doubt due in part to disaffection towards Saul, and to his own fame as a warrior; but what carried most weight was the fact that he was a Judæan, whereas Saul was a Benjamite, for in ancient times tribal relationships were always held in great consideration.

David naturally lost no time in attempting to extend his newly-acquired power. He therefore sent an embassy to the men of Jabesh in Gilead, who had shown their gratitude to

[1] See the last chapter. [2] See pp. 485, 486.

Saul by burying his body at the risk of their own lives. David's message was well calculated to win them for his cause. He thanked them for the fidelity they had shown to Saul, and urged them to be of good courage, though their lord was dead, for he himself had been anointed king by the men of Judah. Whether the men of Jabesh felt inclined to range themselves under his banner we do not know; for at any rate no immediate action could have been taken by them, since the greater part of the tribes of Israel remained faithful to the house of Saul. This was principally due to the influence of Abner, who acknowledged Saul's son Ishbaal (commonly called Ishbosheth) as king.

Ishbaal himself appears to have been a man of feeble character, but his courageous cousin, Abner, gave some strength to his throne. Abner's first enterprise was an attempt to expel David by force of arms and to reduce Judah to obedience; but his hope of surprising him was disappointed at the outset, for David's general, Joab, met Abner as far north as Gibeon. Both the captains hesitated to give the sign of battle and shed the blood of their brothers; and at last Abner proposed that the matter should be decided by a combat of picked champions. To this Joab assented, and twelve warriors from each side joined in the combat, but without bringing things any nearer to a settlement, for all the twenty-four were slain. From this event the place, which was near Gibeon, received the name of "the field of the tournament." The two armies were so much excited by the spectacle of this combat that it was impossible to restrain them any longer. A regular pitched battle was soon raging, and in the end Abner's troops were defeated, and left the field in disordered flight. Amongst David's men three of his cousins[1] especially distinguished themselves. They are always called after their mother, "the sons of Zeruiah," and their names were Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. Now the last named of these, young and swift of foot "like a wild roe," was bent on slaying the valiant Abner and taking his armor as spoil. When Abner noticed the obstinacy with which the reckless lad pursued him, he stopped short and, gazing through the gathering twilight, cried, "Is not that Asahel?" "It is," answered his swift-footed assailant. "Then turn to the right or left," said the magnanimous warrior, as he pursued his way once more, "be content with the spoil of one of my followers!" "Never," answered Asahel, and continued to pursue him. Once again

[1] 1 Chronicles ii. 16.

Abner turned to warn him. "Stand back," he cried to the fool-hardy boy. "Why will you make me slay you? How can I ever look Joab in the face again?" But Asahel persisted. Abner, perhaps rather to keep him off than to kill him, made a thrust at him with the sharpened butt of his spear. But the shaft pierced Asahel through and through, and he fell down dead. All the warriors of David's army who came up to the corpse stood still beside it and went no further. But meanwhile Joab and Abishai continued the pursuit. At sunset Abner rallied his troops and drew them up in close file upon a hill not far from Gibeon. There they awaited their pursuers, and when Joab drew near Abner cried out, "Let there be a truce between us! You know that desperate men are dangerous! Order your troops to pursue their brethren no further." "By God!" answered Joab, "had you not spoken thus we would not have stayed the pursuit till morning!"[1] The two armies then separated and went each upon its way. Abner and his men marched the whole night, to Jericho, across the Jordan, and finally to Mahanaim. Their losses were three hundred. Joab, on the other hand, who had only lost eighteen men besides Asahel, returned to Hebron, which he reached at daybreak.

Of course, the relations between David and Ishbaal continued to be hostile, though we do not read of any other battles. Meanwhile David steadily extended his power. This result was no doubt partially due to his marriage with a daughter of the king of Geshur, a district of Syria;[2] but the great point in his favor was the feeble character of his rival, whose throne must stand or fall with the fidelity of his general, Abner. Abner alone restrained the subjects of Ishbaal from deserting him and recognizing David as their king. But he soon perceived how indispensable he was to his master, became ever more and more overbearing, and at last went so far as to enter on an intrigue with Rizpah, one of Saul's concubines. This was high treason, but when Ishbaal reproved him for his conduct Abner only made him feel his dependence more distinctly than ever. Such a state of things could not last. Abner's contempt for his sovereign finally induced him to pave the way for the revolt of the Israelites, and to enter into negotiations with David. In order to give Abner a suitable pretext for visiting Hebron in person, David sent messengers to Ishbaal to demand the return of his former wife, Saul's daughter Michal, who had been given to another

[1] After an amended version. [2] 2 Samuel iii. 3.

husband when he fled. Ishbaal, no doubt at Abner's instigation, granted the request, had Michal brought from the house of her husband, and, to the intense grief of the latter, sent her to David. How little women were considered in those days! Abner escorted Michal to Hebron, and took the opportunity of coming to an understanding with David and then returned, together with his followers, suspecting no evil. But Joab, who had come in from a raid shortly before Abner departed, took David severely to task for his simplicity in placing so much confidence in Abner, sent messengers after the latter to call him back, and then, with the help of his brother Abishai, treacherously murdered him. Had not Abner slain Asahel? And must not his blood be avenged? Besides this, Joab doubtless feared in his heart that Abner would overshadow him, and finally push him aside. This is the first example of the extraordinary relations which subsisted between David and Joab. We shall come across many others in the course of the history. David was afraid of his valiant captain. He had been guilty of a most outrageous act in murdering his master's guest, and as David stood by the corpse of Abner he uttered a bitter curse on Joab. "May his posterity be leprous and needy, may they fall by the sword and be crushed by want," he cried; but the man whom he cursed so vehemently remained in command of his body-guard! David, however, sang a dirge over Abner, in which he lamented that such a hero, "whose hands were not bound, nor his feet fettered," should fall by the hand of villains, like a fool. On the day of the funeral he steadily refused to eat anything, and said to his friends, "Do you not know that a great warrior is dead? What might not his sword have done for me in my newly-acquired kingdom! These sons of Zeruiah are too strong for me. May Yahweh requite them for their crimes!" All this made a very favorable impression upon the people, and every one saw that David was guiltless of the murder.

When Abner was dead the fate of the house of Saul was soon decided. The power of Ishbaal was gone, and he was soon afterwards murdered by a couple of Benjamite captains, who, so far from getting any thanks for their crime, were put to death by David as assassins. With the life of Ishbaal the last chance of the house of Saul was gone. Jonathan's son Meribaal (generally called Mephibosheth) was still a child, and what was more a cripple, and no one seems to have had any confidence in the other members of Saul's family. David,

the renowned general, the scourge of the Philistines, was now the only hope of the tribes of Israel. Public opinion declared itself in his favor. The dissentients were silenced by fear. David soon received deputations from all parts of the country to greet him as king. In the sanctuary at Hebron victims were slaughtered to Yahweh as the oath of fealty was taken, and David was proclaimed king of Israel. He had reigned two years over Judah alone.

There is only one point in the narrative just given that calls for special notice, and that is the chronological statement at the close, which appears to be directly contradicted by the repeated assertion of the historian, that David reigned over Judah at Hebron for seven and a half years.[1] The same writer tells us, however, that Ishbaal only reigned two years;[2] and if he ascended the throne immediately after his father's death, as we must suppose he did, his reign must have begun at the same time as David's rule in Hebron. What becomes, in this case, of the remaining five and a half years of David's reign "in Hebron over Judah?" Surely the subjects of Ishbaal did not delay their recognition of David all those years after the death of their king.

An attempt has been made to remove this difficulty by bringing it into connection with the curious statement, of which we have spoken before,[3] that Saul only reigned two years. It has been conjectured that the five years of the excess of David's reign over that of Ishbaal must be added to the two years assigned to Saul. In this case the prophet who recorded all these dates looked upon Saul's reign as having ended theoretically as soon as David was anointed, though he was actually king for five years longer. He therefore regards David's reign as having begun when he was anointed, and adds the five years that elapsed between the supposed date of that event and the death of Saul to the two during which David actually reigned at Hebron. The appearance of a similar specimen of chronology by a prophetic writer in the book of Kings, which we shall presently examine, favors this conjecture. But it is simpler to suppose that the expression "David reigned seven years at Hebron over Judah alone" is rather loosely used, and that the real course of events was as follows: David reigned over Judah at Hebron for two years, while Ishbaal swayed the sceptre over the north. On the death of the latter David was, within a comparatively short

[1] 2 Samuel ii. 11, v. 5 (1 Kings ii. 11). [2] 2 Samuel ii. 10. [3] See p. 486.

period, recognized by most of the Israelites as king. After this he had to wage war with the Philistines before he was free to attack Jebus, and finally some time elapsed after the conquest of that city before he took up his residence in it. Thus it was seven and a half years after his arrival at Hebron before he was installed at Jerusalem as king of all Israel.

David's accession to the throne (about B.C. 1058) is a suitable resting-place in the description of Israel's history. Behind us lies the period of the judges, that time of fermentation which constitutes as it were the "middle ages" of Israel. If Saul's dynasty had taken root this period would have closed with his accession to the throne; but, as it is, the few years during which he held the sceptre still belong to the old order of things. During the two and a half centuries that have elapsed since the exodus from Egypt a vast change has come over the sons of Israel. They have abandoned their wandering life, gained settled homes in cities and villages, and begun to cultivate the soil. And thus fresh institutions have become necessary to regulate the mutual relations of the citizens, to secure the co-operation of the tribes, and to establish a firm central authority. Moreover a life in settled homes affords more opportunity for the cultivation of arts and sciences than nomads can enjoy; though it does not appear, from what we know of the history of this period, that the Israelites availed themselves as yet of these opportunities, or even laid the foundations of any such activity. Its earliest traces appear in a later age. But we have seen that the means of securing unity, order, and political authority not only rose into notice, but became a question of life and death during the period of the judges. After many fruitless attempts, and in the midst of violent opposition, the regal form of government was at last established and the people of Israel born.[1]

There is nothing remarkable, however, in the simple fact of a number of related tribes uniting into a single nation. Such a course is often unavoidable. External pressure, and the instinct of self-preservation, make it a necessity. So far, then, there is nothing to distinguish Israel from Moab, Ammon, Edom, and a host of other nations, and, in itself, this scrap of history would have no special interest for us. But the period of the judges settled another question of the utmost importance in the history of religion — the question which religious school should gain the upper hand and point out the

[1] See p. 241.

way for the whole nation to follow when united. The Israelites had taken possession of Canaan, and established themselves in the midst of the old inhabitants, and although they were very closely connected with them, and spoke almost the same language, yet they had their own special characteristics, chiefly due to the influence of Moses, which constituted their real superiority. They brought with them the worship of Yahweh and the code of the ten commandments, a veritable treasure, a fountain of spiritual blessings. The question was, whether they were to preserve this treasure or to barter it for the advantages to be derived from friendly relations with the Canaanites. Israelites and Canaanites lived together. Which was to exercise the preponderating influence, and set the tone for both? Were the Baals to gain the upper hand, and reduce Yahweh to the rank of the special god of a single family, or at most of a tribe? Or was Yahweh to retain his place as the national god of Israel, to whom all other gods were subject? The answer to this question was very closely connected with the circumstances under which the regal form of government was introduced. For if a man with Canaanite sympathies became the ruler of the people, then Yahweh's cause was lost, since the religion favored by the lord of the land was sure to prevail; a rule which has held good not only in antiquity but in more modern times. Had this been so, then Israel would have forfeited its religious privileges, and descended to the level of other peoples. All the blessings which have been conferred upon mankind by Israel would have been lost. Doubtless the light would have broken through somewhere, and man would yet have learned the will of God. Had the work of Moses come to nought, some other man of God would have stood up elsewhere, and religious truth would have displayed her conquering might amongst some other people, perhaps in some other quarter of the globe. But since we know by the event that Israel was the chosen people which preserved the germs of a purer religion than was elsewhere developed, the chosen people amongst whom Jesus was born, the whole course of Israelite history gains a deep and special interest for us.

Glancing back upon the period of the judges, we can see clearly enough the dangers which sometimes threatened the worship of Yahweh, and the Israelitish character of the whole people. What would have become of them, for instance, if the dynasty of Jerubbaal-Gideon and his son Abimelech had struck root, and extended over the whole of Israel? The

work of Moses would have perished, and the genius of Canaan would have triumphed. But, as we saw, it was just because the true spirit of Israel was too strong for it that the house of Gideon fell. Though the invaders were inferior to the older inhabitants in many respects, yet they were morally superior to them; and for that reason no dynasty could endure unless it rose on true Israelite foundations, gained the support of the Israelite spirit, and raised on high the standard of Yahweh. It was not from the north, where the Canaanites had far more influence than in the south, but from the centre of the land, from Benjamin, the country of Samuel, the focus of the religious revival amongst the worshippers of Yahweh, that Saul, the first man under whose sceptre all Israel bowed, came forth; and when his headstrong passion had caused his fall, it was from the south that David came, supported by the prophets and priests of Yahweh, to attempt the task of rescuing Israel and raising her to power.

The result of the spiritual efforts of the period of the judges was to establish the people of Israel in the worship of Yahweh, the god of Moses, as their national deity.

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